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SELECTED STORIES, OF
ANATOLE FRANCE,

THE WORKS OF
ANATOLE FRANCE
IN ENGLISH

Edited by the late FREDERIC CHAPMAN
and J. LEWIS MAY

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THE BODLEY HEAD

SELECTED STORIES OF

ANATOLE FRANCE

ARRANGED, WITH A FOREWORD,

by

J. LEWIS MAY

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JOHN LANE
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FOREWORD

IT is an easy thing to select stories of supreme excellence by Anatole France. The difficulty is to know where to stop. And, now, when I come to give a final glance at my sheaf, I find myself wondering why I chose this story rather than that, and again, why this one rather than that other, and so on, till I am tempted to replace these twelve by a dozen others—not a whit less excellent! Well, this sort of diffidence, this dissatisfaction with oneself is—or ought to be—the experience of every conscientious anthologist. But at all events, I think I can claim to have made as varied and representative a selection as the limits of this little volume will allow. At the beginning, I have placed some stories taken from what are usually known as the “autobiographical”

Foreword

volumes, in which, under the name of Pierre Nozière, Anatole France recalls, in a series of infinitely delicate vignettes, the memories of his early days. How much of fact and how much of imagination, enter into these enchanting evocations of a "passed world" cannot here be discussed. The reader must be content with what Anatole France himself says of them: "I have invented details to replace circumstances that had escaped me, but these inventions never had any other purpose than to reveal or illustrate a character. In short I believe that no one ever lied with a greater regard for the truth." "The Procurator of Judæa" which follows, sums up, in its famous ironic ending, a whole philosophy of history and is perhaps the most popular and, in its own *genre*, the greatest of Anatole France's stories. Of a tenderer beauty, and hardly less familiar, is the tale of "Our Lady's Juggler." It is such stories as this last—there are many of them scattered up and down his works—such pictures as this of Barnaby, the wandering juggler turned monk, who performed his

Foreword

acrobatic contortions before the Virgin's statue, because he had nought else—no skill in illuminating missals, no gift of song wherewith to do her honour—that makes it not inappropriate to speak of Anatole France, for all his scepticism, as *anima naturaliter Christiana*. Somewhat in the same key, "Balthasar" tells how the black king of Ethiopia conquered his earthly love for Balkis, Queen of Sheba, and followed the Star of the East to Bethlehem. . In a very different vein, "Putois" narrates the surprising history of a rascally odd-job man—who never existed! Again, the story of "San Satiro" deals with a theme that always had a peculiar fascination for Anatole France, namely the ousting of the little pagan divinities, the nymphs of stream and woodland, by the victorious forces of the new religion. "The Lady of Verona" recounts the fate of a beautiful woman who did *not* marry for love. "A Good Lesson Well Learnt," a story based on the Omerian exhortation,

Come make the most of what we yet may spend
Before we, too, into the dust descend. . . .

Foreword

shows the singular effect on a lovely woman of a most excellent piece of spiritual advice, and exhibits in the form of an entertaining and gently ironic parable, Anatole France's own philosophy of life. This, and the concluding story, "Five Fair Ladies," furnish, incidentally, fairly typical examples of the rather daring humour which English people, with native complacency, are pleased to describe as "Gallic."

J. LEWIS MAY.

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THE SHADOW

Translated by J. LEWIS MAY

THE SHADOW

I WAS in my twentieth year when an extraordinary thing happened to me. My father had sent me down into Lower Maine to see to a piece of family business, and I set out one afternoon from the pretty little town of Ernée on a twenty-mile ride. I was making for the district of Saint Jean in order to pay a visit to the house—at that time untenanted—which had sheltered my father's family for more than two hundred years. It was early in December. Snow had been falling since morning, and the road, which lay between two quickset hedges, had given way in many places, so that my horse and I had much ado to avoid the quagmires.

But, when I got within five or six miles of Saint Jean, the surface began to improve,

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and, despite the fact that a furious gale had sprung up, and that the frozen snow was whipping my face, I put my horse to the gallop. The trees which lined the road flew past me in the darkness, like hideous, stricken ghosts. How horrible they were, those trees, lopped off at the top, covered with lumps and gashes extending frightful, twisted limbs! They awoke a kind of terror in me, for I could not help letting my mind run on a story which a *vicaire* at Saint-Marcel d'Ernée had told me the night before. One of these trees—one of these mutilated veterans of Le Bocage—a chestnut that had been decapitated more than two hundred years ago, and was as hollow as a tower, was riven from top to bottom by lightning on the 24th of February, 1849. Looking through the fissure, some people saw the skeleton of a man standing bolt upright within it, with a gun in one hand and a rosary in the other. On a watch, which was picked up at his feet, was engraved the name of Claude Nozière. This Claude—my father's great-uncle—

The Shadow

had been a great smuggler in his day. In 1794 he attached himself to the Chouans, and joined the band commanded by Treton, commonly called Jambe d'Argent. . . Sorely wounded and hotly pursued by the partisans of the Republic, the hunted man went to hide himself, and to die, in the hollow of this old chestnut. Friend and foe alike were ignorant of the fate that had befallen him; and it was not until fifty years after his death that the mystery was solved, and the old Chouan's grave laid bare by a stroke of lightning.

His story came into my mind as the leafless, stunted trees flew past, and I put spurs to my horse. It was pitch dark when I reached Saint Jean.

Swaying to and fro in the wind, the sign-board creaked drearily on its chains in the darkness as I made my way up to the inn. Having attended to my horse myself, I entered the parlour and threw myself into an old arm-chair which stood in the chimney corner. As I sat warming myself, the firelight shone upon the countenance of my

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hostess. She was old and hideously ugly. Her features seemed prematurely covered with the dust of the grave, and all that was discernible in her face was a nose half eaten away and a pair of red-rimmed, expressionless orbs. I was a stranger, and she kept darting furtive and mistrustful glances in my direction. To set her mind at rest, I told her my name was Nozière—a name I felt sure she would know. But she only shook her head, and replied that there were no Nozières left. However, she consented to prepare me some supper, and, throwing a faggot on the hearth, she quitted the room.

I was weary and low-spirited, weighed down with an indescribable sensation of mental oppression.

Thick-coming fancies, scenes of violence and gloom, tormented my imagination. After a while, I fell into a fitful doze; but in my uneasy slumber I could hear the moaning of the wind in the chimney, and now and again a gust of more than usual violence would fling the ashes from the hearth over my very boots.

The Shadow

When, a few minutes afterwards, I opened my eyes, I beheld a sight that I shall never forget. I saw at the far end of the room, silhouetted with the utmost distinctness against the whitewashed wall, a motionless shadow—the shadow of a young girl. The form was so instinct with gentleness, purity, and charm, that, as I beheld it, I felt all my weariness, all my melancholy, melt away into wonder and delight.

I gazed at this vision for what, I suppose, was about a minute—it may have been more, it may have been less; for I have no means of measuring the exact length of time. Then I turned round to see who it could be that was casting so lovely a shadow. Not a soul was in the room . . . no one but the old woman spreading a white cloth on the table. Again I looked at the wall: the shadow had disappeared.

Then something resembling a lover's longing took possession of my heart, and I grieved for the loss I had just sustained.

My mind was perfectly rational, and I pondered for a few seconds on what had

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occurred. Then, turning to the landlady, I said:

"Mother, tell me, who was it that was standing there a second or two ago?"

The old woman answered in a tone of surprise that she had seen no one.

I hastened to the floor. Snow was falling heavily; it lay thick and white upon the ground, yet not a footprint was to be seen.

"Mother, are you sure that there is not a woman in the house?"

The old woman replied that she was quite alone in the place.

I next endeavoured to ascertain, by careful observation, the precise position that a person would have had to occupy to cast a shadow where I saw it. I pointed to this spot with my hand, and said:

"There, that is where she was, I tell you."

The hag approached with a taper in her hand, and, fixing her horrible expressionless eyes upon me, she exclaimed:

"Now I know that you are not deceiving me; I know that you are really a Nozière. Can you be a son of Jean Nozière, the one

The Shadow

that is a doctor in Paris? I knew young René, an uncle of his. He, too, used to see a woman that no one else could see. No doubt it is a curse that God has laid upon the family for the sin committed by Claude, the Chouan, who went to perdition with the baker's wife."

"Do you mean the Claude whose skeleton was discovered in a hollow tree, holding a gun and a rosary?" I asked.

"My good young sir, that rosary was no good to him. He had lost his soul for a woman."

The old woman had no more to tell me about the matter; but I could scarcely put my lips to the bread, the bacon and eggs, and cider that she placed before me. I was continually turning to look at the wall where I had seen the shadow. Oh! yes! I had seen it plainly enough. It was delicate, and more distinctly outlined than a shadow naturally produced by the flickering light of a fire or the smoky flame of a tallow candle.

Next day I went and looked at the

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deserted house where Claude and René had dwelt in their day. I scoured the neighbourhood; I cross-questioned the curé; but I learned nothing that would enable me to discover the identity of the young girl whose ghost I had seen.

Even now I am not so sure whether the old woman's account of the matter was the true one or not. Perhaps it was as she said; perhaps there, in the bleak solitudes of Le Bocage, some phantom had been wont to appear to those peasants whose descendant I am, and, maybe, it was the ancestral shadow which haunted of old my untutored, dreamy forefathers that presented itself with unwonted grace to the gaze of their visionary child.

Was it indeed the Nozière family ghost that I saw in the inn at Saint Jean, or was it not rather that a sign was vouchsafed to me that winter's night, a sign that the best that this life can bestow was to be mine; that kindly Nature had granted me the most precious of all her gifts—the gift of dreams?

MADAME MATHIAS

Translated by J. LEWIS MAY.

MADAME MATHIAS

MADAME MATHIAS was a sort of half-housekeeper, half-nurse, and being old and grumpy, was treated with great consideration in our establishment. My father and mother, who had given me over to her charge, never called her anything but Madame Mathias. I was therefore greatly surprised one day to discover that she had a Christian name, a young girl's name, a pretty-pretty name; in fact, that she was called "Virginie." Madame Mathias had had her trials and tribulations, and she was proud of them. Hollow-cheeked, with little sharp, beady eyes and wisps of grey hair straggling out beneath her cap; a little black, dried-up creature with toothless, loose-lipped mouth, grim projecting chin, always silent and mournful—such was

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Madame Mathias, and she used to get on my father's nerves.

Mamma, who ruled the household with the vigilance of a queen bee, used to confess that she dared not find fault with this dour old soul, who would say nothing to her, but just gaze at her in silence with the eyes of a hungry wolf. Every one looked with awe on Madame Mathias. I was the only one in the house who was not afraid of her. But I knew her, I had divined her secret, I knew that she was weak.

At eight years old I had proved myself a better psychologist than my father at forty, though he was of a meditative cast of mind, observant enough as idealists go, and possessed of a few notions on the art of physiognomy, which he had picked up from Lavater. I remember hearing him discourse at length on Napoleon's death-mask, which Dr. Antomarchi had brought back with him from St. Helena. He had a plaster cast of it hanging in his study, and the thing had been the terror of my childhood. I must, however, confess that I had

Madame Mathias

a great advantage over my father. I loved Madame Mathias, and Madame Mathias loved me. I was inspired by sympathy; he had only science to guide him. Besides, he did not really try very hard to discover Madame Mathias' true character. As he derived no pleasure from the sight of her, he had probably never looked at her closely enough to see that a pretty little nose, a nose of cherubic dumptiness, had, with a singular effect of contrast, been planted in the middle of that austere mask beneath which she presented herself to the world. And in truth it was not a nose to arrest the attention. It passed practically unnoticed amid the scene of ruin and desolation that was displayed by the countenance of Madame Mathias. Nevertheless, it was not unworthy of remark. As I now call up its image from the inmost recesses of my memory, it stirs me with an indefinable sense of tenderness and sorrow, of humility and regret. I was the only one in the world who noticed it, and even I did not begin to appreciate its true significance until it had

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become a faint and far-off memory, retained by no one but myself. Never have my thoughts lingered on this subject with a livelier interest than they do to-day. Ah, Madame Mathias, what would I not give to see you again now as you used to be in your lifetime here upon earth, to see you knitting stockings, a needle perched up above your ear, your goffered cap, and your huge barnacles bestriding a nose all too feeble to support them! Those barnacles of yours were always slipping down, and you were for ever getting impatient with them for doing so; for you never learned to bear the irremediable with a smile, and, amid the trials of your daily life, you always wore the aspect of a much-wronged soul. Ah, Madame Mathias, Madame Mathias, what would I not give to see you once again in your habit as you lived! or at least to know what fate has been yours these thirty years that have gone by since you quitted this world—this world in which such little joy was yours, in which you filled so small a place, but which, withal, you loved so dearly.

Madame Mathias

Yes, I knew it well enough you were in love with Life, and you clung to the things of this world with the desperate tenacity of the unhappy. Could I but have tidings of you now, what deep content, what infinite peace, would be mine! Into that lowly coffin, wherein you vanished from our sight that fair spring morning—it was, I remember, one of those mild, spring days you used to love so well—you bore with you countless things that were mine no less than yours; things that touched the heart, a whole world of ideas brought into being by the association of your old age and my childhood. What have you done with them, Madame Mathias? Do you bethink yourself, in the region where you are tarrying now, of the long walks we used to take together, you and I?

Day by day when lunch was over we used to sally forth together, bending our steps toward the deserted avenues, toward the loneliness of the Quai de Javel and the Quai de Billy, and the melancholy Plaine de Grenelle, where the dust drove mournfully before the wind. With my little hand

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clasped in hers, for this gave me confidence, I used to let my gaze roam over the gaunt immensity of the scene. But between that old woman, that dreamy little boy, and those forlorn suburban regions there reigned a harmony profound. Those dusty trees, those red-walled taverns, an old pensioner who would pass by now and then cockade in hat, the cake woman who sat with her back against the parapet beside her lemon-stoppered bottles of cocoa—such was the world in which Madame Mathias felt at her ease, for Madame Mathias was a true daughter of the people.

It chanced one summer's day, as we were making our way along the Quai d'Orsay, that I begged her to go down to the water's edge, so that we might get a nearer view of the cranes that were at work unloading gravel from some barges; a request to which she gave her immediate assent. She always did what I wished, because she loved me, and love deprived her of all her strength. Down there on the river brink, holding on to my nurse's print dress, I stood gazing with

Madame Mathias

wondering curiosity at the machine which, after the fashion of a patient diving bird, drew forth huge basketfuls from the barge, and then with a mighty semicircular sweep of its long crane proceeded to deposit them on the bank. As the heap of gravel accumulated, men in blue jean trousers, stripped to the waist, their skins tanned a brick-red colour, came up and threw it in shovelfuls against a screen.

I tugged at the print dress with might and main.

"Madame Mathias, what are they doing it for? Tell me, Madame Mathias!"

She made no answer. She had gone down on her knees to pick something up from the ground. At first I thought it was a pin. She found two or three pins every day and stuck them in her bodice. This time, however, it was not a pin. It was a pocket-knife with a copper handle, representing the Colonne Vendôme.

"Let me look; let me look at the knife, Madame Mathias. Give it to me. Why don't you give it to me, Madame Mathias?"

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Mute and motionless, she was gazing at the little knife with rapt attention, and a sort of wild look that almost made me feel afraid.

"Madame Mathias, what is the matter? Tell me, Madame Mathias."

In feeble tones, quite unlike her customary voice, she murmured:

"He used to have one exactly like it."

And I:

"Who, Madame Mathias? Who used to have one exactly like it?"

And as I kept tugging away at her dress she turned and looked at me with seared eyes, in which nought save black and red were visible. She seemed surprised.

"Who?" said she; "why, Mathias of course!"

"Mathias? What Mathias?" I demanded.

She drew her hand across her eyes, which looked all red and drawn, put the knife carefully away in her pocket underneath her handkerchief, and said:

"Mathias, my husband."

"You were married to him then?"

Madame Mathias

"Yes, worse luck for me. I was well off once. I had a mill of my own at Annot, near Chartres. He ran through everything. Meal, donkey, mill and all—everything went. He spent every sou, and then, when I had nothing left, off he went. He was an old soldier—an Imperial Grenadier—who had been wounded at Waterloo. He had picked up his bad ways in the army."

All this greatly astonished me. I pondered for a while and then said:

"Your husband wasn't a husband like papa, was he, Madame Mathias?"

Madame Mathias had ceased crying, and there was something of pride in her tones as she replied: . . .

"You don't come across men like Mathias nowadays. He had everything a man could wish for. He was tall, strong, handsome, and gay. Always smart, always a rose in his buttonhole. He was a man you were bound to take to, was Mathias!"

THE TWO TAILORS
Translated by J. LEWIS MAY

THE TWO TAILORS

THE tunic doesn't seem a very suitable thing for schoolboys. It is not a civilian garment, and to insist on their wearing it is to encroach unnecessarily upon their independence. I wore one myself, and my recollections of it are not of the pleasantest.

I must mention that, connected with the school from which I emerged with such a plentiful lack of knowledge, was a skilful tailor whose name was Grégoire. In imparting to his tunics what the blameless tunic must have—to wit, stylish shoulders, chest, and hips, Monsieur Grégoire was without a rival. Monsieur Grégoire fashioned your skirts with singular artistry. The breeches, too, were worthy of the tunic; full about the thigh, and terminat-

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ing with a little gaiter-like finish over the boot.

If you were rigged out by Monsieur Grégoire and only knew how to wear your *képi*—it was “form” in those days to have the peak turned up—you were the last word in style.

Monsieur Grégoire was an artist. When, on Mondays, during midday recreation, he appeared in the playground with his green baize toilet-bag, containing two or three masterpieces in the way of tunics, flung over his arm, the boys for whom these splendid productions were destined stopped their play and accompanied Monsieur Grégoire into one of the ground-floor classrooms to try on their new uniforms. Grave and attentive, Monsieur Grégoire proceeded to make all manner of little marks on the cloth with a piece of white chalk. At the end of a week, in the same green toilet-bag, he would bring back an irreproachable costume.

Unluckily Monsieur Grégoire charged a high price for his tunics; and this he had a

The Two Tailors

right to do, for he was without a peer. If you want luxuries you have to pay for them, and Monsieur Grégoire was a tailor *de luxe*. I can see him now, pale and melancholy, with his beautiful white hair, and his blue eyes that seemed to look at you so wearily behind his gold-rimmed spectacles. He was a most distinguished-looking man, and, without the green baize toilet-bag, you might have taken him for a magistrate. Monsieur Grégoire was the tailor of the smart set. He had to allow long credits, for his customers were rich—that is to say, they were people who ran up long bills! It's only poor people who pay cash. There is nothing meritorious in it. They do it because they can't get credit. Monsieur Grégoire was aware that nothing paltry or humdrum was expected of him. He felt that he owed it to his customers and to himself to produce at long intervals big things in the way of bills.

Monsieur Grégoire had two price-lists according to the quality of the goods supplied. For example, he made a difference

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between the fine gold palm-leaves specially embroidered on the collar itself, and the ready-made palm-leaves worked on an oblong piece of cloth and less carefully finished, which had to be stitched on to the collar. Thus there were two scales of charges: the high and the low. But the low scale was ruinous enough. The boys who were turned out by Grégoire constituted a race apart, an aristocratic caste, a sort of "upper-ten" in two grades, according to the sort of collar they had, to their tunics. My parents' position never permitted me to entertain the hope of becoming a member of Monsieur Grégoire's clientèle.

My mother was a very thrifty woman; she was also very charitable. Her desire to befriend others often led her to act in a manner that revealed her goodness of heart—and of hearts the world never contained a kinder—but it occasioned me a few not inconsiderable inconveniences. Somehow or other she found out a protégé called Rabiou, a little fellow with an apostolic head set on a stunted gnome-like body, who

The Two Tailors

lived in the rue des Canettes. Rabiou followed the joint occupation of concierge and tailor; and as it appeared that this same Rabiou was on the verge of starvation and was withal a deserving man, she forthwith began to cast about for a means of helping him. She gave him presents; but Rabiou had many mouths to feed, and besides that, he had pride; and, as I have already remarked, my mother was not rich. The little she could give him was not enough to set him on his legs. She next began to cudgel her brains to devise work for him, and she ordered as many pairs of trousers, waist-coats, frock-coats, and great-coats for my father as her common sense would allow.

My father stood to gain nothing by the arrangement. The garments of our sartorial concierge became him but indifferently. But that, good simple soul, he never so much as noticed. My mother noticed it though, but she said—and she was right—that my father was a very fine-looking man and that he adorned his clothes if his clothes did not adorn him; adding that a

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man need never despair about his attire if it be warm enough and stitched with honest thread by a God-fearing man and a father of twelve.

The worst of it was that, though he had supplied my father with many more clothes than he wanted, Rabiou was no better off than before. His wife had a delicate chest, and his twelve children were all anæmic. A porter's lodge in the rue des Canettes is not calculated to make children look as strong as those English boys who go in for nothing but rowing and athletics. The tailor-concierge having no money to buy physic, my mother took it into her head to order a tunic of him for me. She might as well have told him to make her a dress.

The idea of a tunic gave Rabiou pause. An agonized sweat broke out on his apostolic brow. But he was brave, and he was a mystic. He set his hand to the task. He said his prayers, he spared himself no pains, and he got no sleep. He was deeply moved, grave, and pensive. Imagine it! A tunic, a close-fitting garment, a garment

The Two Tailors

of precision! And I a long, weedy thing, with no figure, most difficult to fit. At last the poor soul got through with the business. He finished the tunic. But what a tunic it was! Shoulders all wrong, all sloppy about, the chest, it got sloppier and sloppier as it went down till it ended in a great paunch. But the cut of the thing might have been borne with if it had not been such a terrific colour, a crude, staring blue, and the collar was sewn not with palms, but with lyres. Lyres, ye gods! Rabiou little thought that I was to become a very distinguished poet. He knew not that deep down in my desk I was cherishing a notebook containing verses entitled "Early Blossoms." I had thought of that name myself and I liked it. But the sartorial concierge knew nothing about all that. The lyres were entirely his own idea. To complete the disaster, the collar, which should have fitted close about the neck, displayed a tendency to sag and gape in the most unseemly fashion.

Like the crane, I had a long neck, and

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as it rose up, from this gaping collar it presented a lamentable and woebegone appearance. I thought there was something wrong about it when I was trying it on, and I mentioned it to the tailor-concierge. But he, good man, by God's grace had made a tunic—which was more than he had ever expected to do—and he refused to tinker with it lest he should make matters worse. And he was right. With considerable misgivings I asked my mother how I looked. Now she, as I have observed, was a saint, and she replied after the manner of Mrs. Primrose, saying:

“A child is handsome enough, if he be good enough.”

And she bade me wear my tunic with meekness.

I wore it for the first time on a Sunday, as was befitting since it was new. Heavens! what a reception I got the first time I appeared in it in the playground during recreation.

“Here comes Sugar-Loaf, old Sugar-Loaf!” yelled all the fellows with one accord.

• . The Two Tailors

It was a trying moment. At a glance they had taken in the unsightly bulge, the too bright blue, the lyres and the gaping collar. They all started ramming stones down the back of my neck by that ill-fated opening in the collar of my tunic. Handful after handful went down and still the void was not filled.

The little tailoring concierge of the rue des Canettes had never bethought him how many stones could be crammed into the dorsal pouch with which he had provided me.

Surfeited with stones, I began to lay about me with my fists. The others returned my blows and I hit back again. Then they let me alone. Next Sunday the battle was renewed, and so long as I wore that unhappy tunic I was tormented in all manner of ways and condemned perpetually to pass my days with gravel down my neck.

It was odious. To complete my discomfiture, our *surveillant*, the young Abbé Simler, so far from standing by me in the storm, heartlessly left me to my fate. Up

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till then the Abbé, observing the gentleness of my disposition and the interest—remarkable in one so young—which I displayed in grave and serious matters, had admitted me, in company with certain other meritorious pupils, to discussions of whose charm and value I was fully sensible. I was one of the select few to whom, on Sundays, when recreation was longer than on ordinary days, the Abbé Simler expatiated with pride on the greatness of the sacerdotal office; and even condescended to give an account of the trying situations with which an officiating priest might be confronted in the celebration of the sacred mysteries.

The Abbé Simler treated these subjects with a lofty seriousness that filled my heart with joy. One Sunday, strolling leisurely up and down the playground, he began a story about a priest who discovered a spider in the chalice after the consecration.

"Imagine," he said, "how upset and pained he must have been! Still he did not lose his presence of mind. He showed himself equal to the terrible emergency.

The Two Tailors

Delicately he took hold of the insect between his thumb and forefinger, and——” At this point in the narrative the bell rang for vespers. The Abbé Simler, who was a great stickler for the rules it was his duty to enforce, stopped short and ordered the boys to fall in. I was keenly anxious to know how the priest had dealt with the sacrilegious spider, but owing to that tunic of mine my curiosity was fared never to be satisfied.

Next Sunday, when he saw me got up in so ludicrous a garb, the Abbé Simler smiled discreetly and kept me at a distance. He was an excellent man; still he was but a man; and he showed no anxiety to share in the ridicule of which I was the object, or of compromising his cassock by fellowship with my tunic what time I was having stones stuffed down my neck, that being, as I have explained, the incessant occupation of my classmates. His attitude was not unreasonable. Besides, he was afraid to come too near me on account of the missiles which were hurtling about me from all points of

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the compass. His apprehensions were justifiable. Peradventure, too, my tunic shocked his sense of the beautiful, for whose development he may have been indebted to the ceremonies of public worship and the pomps of the Church. Be that as it may, one thing is certain: he banished me from those Sunday discussions by which I set such great store. This ostracism he brought about by means of skilful and effectual evasions. He never said an uncivil word to me, for he was a most polite person.

Whenever I approached, he studiously looked another way and spoke in an undertone so that I should not hear what he was saying. And when, with some shyness, I ventured to interpose a question now and again, he affected not to hear, and possibly he really did not hear. It did not take me long to realize that I was not wanted, and thenceforth I ceased to make one of the Abbé Simler's intimate circle.

This reverse caused me some little mortification. After a time my schoolfellows' pranks roused my ire. The blows I received

The Two Tailors

I learned to repay, and with interest. That is a useful art to acquire. I blush to confess that I have never employed it since. But some of the fellows on whom I bestowed a good drubbing became my ardent sympathisers.

So it is that, owing to the shortcomings of a bungling tailor, I shall remain in perpetual ignorance of the story of the priest and the spider. The conclusion of the whole matter was that while, on the one hand, I had to put up with innumerable annoyances, I made on the other a few good friends, which shows how true it is that in human affairs good and evil are everlastingly intermingled. But in this case the evil outweighed the good. That tunic wore for ever. I did my utmost to make it unrepresentable, but all my efforts were vain. My mother was right. Rabiou was an honest man, a God-fearing man, and his cloth was sound.

THE LAST WORDS OF DECIUS
MUS

Translated by J. LEWIS MAY .

THE LAST WORDS OF DĒCIUS MŪS

THIS morning, as I was strolling along the quays, rummaging among the bookstalls, I happened to come across an odd volume of Livy in the penny box. As I stood idly turning the pages, I chanced upon the following passage: "The remnants of the Roman army made their way to Canusium under cover of night," and this sentence reminded me of Monsieur Chotard. Now, when my thoughts light upon Monsieur Chotard, they do not leave him in a hurry; and I was still thinking of him as I went in for lunch. A smile still played about my mouth, and I was called upon to reveal the reason.

"The reason, my children," said I; "the reason is none other than Monsieur Chotard."

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“And who is Chotard, pray, that he causes you this amusement?” they inquired.

“I will tell you,” said I. “If I bore you, well, at all events, pretend to be listening, and don’t let me suspect that I am an irrepressible babbler, babbling stories to himself.

“I was fourteen, and I was in the Third. My professor’s name was Chotard. He had the florid complexion of an old monk, and an old monk he was!

“Brother Chotard had been one of the most docile members of the flock of Saint Francis when, in 1830, he flung his monkish habit to the winds and donned the raiment of the layman, which, however, he never succeeded in wearing to advantage. Wherefore did Brother Chotard take this step? Some say it was love, others that it was fear, and that after those three Glorious Days in July, the Sovereign People having hurled a good few cabbage-stalks at the Capuchin of ———, Brother Chotard leapt over the monastery walls in order to preserve his persecutors from committing so heinous a sin as maltreating a friar.

• The Last Words of Decius Mus

“The good brother was a man of parts. He took his degree, began to teach, and lived so long and so well, that his hair was going grey, his cheeks growing fat, and his nose turning red, when I and my comrades found ourselves placed beneath his ferule.

“What a bellicose professor he was! You ought to have seen him when, book in hand, he marched the army of Brutus to Philippi. What courage! What nobility of soul! What heroism! But he chose his own time to be a hero, and that time was not the present time. In real life Monsieur Chotard was an obviously anxious and timid man. He was easily frightened.

“He was afraid of thieves, he was afraid of dogs, he was afraid of thunder, he was afraid of carts, and, indeed, of anything from which the hide of an honest man could possibly sustain an injury, whether from far or near.

“True, it was only his body that dwelt among us; his spirit was away in the dim and distant Past. He fought and died, this

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worthiest of men, with Leonidas at Thermopylæ. He navigated the waters of Salamis on the ship of Themistocles. He fought at Cannæ side by side with Paulus Æmilius. He fell, bathed in gore, into Lake Trasimenus, and, many years after, a fisherman plying his nets in those waters brought to the surface the ring he had worn as a Roman knight. At Pharsalia, he breathed defiance against Cæsar and the gods themselves. He brandished his shattered sword over the dead body of Varus in the forest of Hercynia. He was a famous warrior! But notwithstanding his resolve to sell his life dearly on the banks of the Aegospotamos, notwithstanding his proud determination to drain the cup of freedom and death in beleaguered Numantia, Monsieur Chotard was by no means above plotting with crafty captains and lending himself to the most perfidious of stratagems.

“One of the stratagems which called for special mention was that which Monsieur Chotard described when commenting on a passage in Ælian whereby the hostile army

. The Last Words of Decius Mus

is lured into a narrow gorge and crushed beneath huge masses of rock.

“He did not go on to tell us whether the hostile forces frequently obliged by lending themselves to this engaging manœuvre. But let me come to the idiosyncrasy by which Monsieur Chotard particularly impressed himself on the minds of his pupils.

“Whenever he gave us a composition to write—Latin or French—it was always about battles, sieges, expiatory and propitiatory ceremonies, and it was when he came to give out the corrected versions of these narratives that he brought his finest eloquence into play. Whether in French or Latin, his language and delivery were always expressive of the same warlike enthusiasm. He sometimes had to interrupt the flow of his ideas in order to administer some well-merited rebukes to his class, but the tone of his discourse remained heroic, even when he was occupied with such inglorious matters as these. And so it fell out that, speaking, now like a consul exhorting his troops, now like a third-form master

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distributing 'impots,' but always in the same grandiose tone of voice, he greatly bewildered his pupils; it being quite impossible to tell whether the schoolmaster or the consul was speaking. One day he completely surpassed himself in this line, and delivered a really incomparable oration. We all got this speech up by heart, and I took care to write it down in my notebook without omitting a word of it.

"Here it is as I heard it, and as I hear it now, for the voice of the unctuous Chotard still resounds in my ears, filling them with its solemn and majestic monotone:

"THE LAST WORDS OF DECIUS MUS

"'Prepared to offer his life as a sacrifice to the Deities of the other world, just ere he drove his spurs into the flanks of his impetuous courser, Decius Mus turned a last time to his comrades in arms, saying':

"Unless you keep silence better than this, I shall keep the whole class in. 'For my country's sake I am about to enter into immortality. The abyss awaits me. I am

' The Last Words of Decius M^{us}

about to lay down my life for the common weal.' Fontanet, you will copy out ten pages of grammar. 'Thus, in his wisdom, hath ordained Jupiter Capitolinus, eternal guardian of the Eternal City.' Nozière, if, as I believe, you are passing on your work to Fontanet for him to copy, as he usually does, I shall write to your father. 'It is meet and right for a citizen to lay down his life for the common weal. Envy me, therefore, and weep not for me.' It is silly to laugh at nothing, Nozière; you will stay in on Thursday. 'My example will dwell among you.' This giggling is more than I can put up with; I shall inform the Principal of your conduct. 'And I shall behold, as I look forth from Elysium, where the shades of Heroes abide, the Virgins of the Republic laying chaplets of flowers at the foot of my statues!' "

"In those days I possessed a prodigious faculty for laughing. I employed it to the full on The Last Words of Decius M^{us}; and when, after supplying us with this most

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potent reason for mirth, Monsieur Chotard proceeded to remark that it was inept to laugh at nothing, I buried my face in a dictionary and became dead to the world. Those who, when they were boys or fifteen, were never doubled up with laughter what time the 'impots' descended upon them like hailstones, have missed one of the luxuries of life.

"But it must not be supposed that my capabilities were limited to playing the fool in class. I was a good enough little Humanist in my way, very keenly alive to all that is attractive and noble in what we so happily call *Belles-Lettres*.

"I had, even in those days, a great love of style both in Latin and French, a love which I still retain, despite the advice and example of many of my more successful contemporaries. As usually happens in the case of people whose cherished convictions are regarded with scant esteem, I have gloried in what is perhaps but a vain and foolish thing after all. I have kept my faith in Literature, and I am still a staunch upholder

• The Last Words of Decius Mus

of the Classics. Call me an 'aristocrat, call me a mandarin if you will, I still believe that six or seven years of literary culture will impart to the mind, duly prepared to receive it, a loftiness, a strength, an elegance and a beauty, attainable by no other means.

"For myself, Sophocles and Virgil have afforded me moments of pure delight. Monsieur Chotard, yes, Monsieur Chotard, with the aid of Titus Livius, inspired me with noble dreams! The imagination of children is a wondrous thing; and splendid are the visions that fill the little rascals' heads. When he did not send me off into fits of laughter, Monsieur Chotard used to inspire me with enthusiasm.

"Every time I heard him, with his unctuous pulpit tones, slowly declaiming that sentence: 'The remnants of the Roman army made their way to Canusium under cover of night,' I beheld a silent host pass by in the bare, moonlit country, along a road fringed with tombs, their ashen faces smeared with blood and dust, their helmets dented, their breastplates battered and tarnished,

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their swords' shattered at the hilt. And this ghost-like procession, as 'it melted slowly into the night, was so grave, so mournful, and so majestic, that my heart leapt within me for grief and admiration."

THE PROCURATOR OF JUDÆA

Translated by FREDERIC CHAPMAN

THE PROCURATOR OF JUDÆA

L. ÆLIUS LAMIA, born in Italy of illustrious parents, had not yet discarded the *toga prætexta* when he set out for the schools of Athens to study philosophy. Subsequently he took up his residence at Rome, and in his house on the Esquiline, amid a circle of youthful wastrels, abandoned himself to licentious courses. But being accused of engaging in criminal relations with Lepida, the wife of Sulpicius Quirinus, a man of consular rank, and being found guilty, he was exiled by Tiberius Cæsar. At that time he was just entering his twenty-fourth year. During the eighteen years that his exile lasted he traversed Syria, Palestine, Cappadocia, and Armenia, and made prolonged visits to Antioch, Cæsarea and Jerusalem. When, after the death of

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Tiberius, Caius was raised to the purple, Lamia obtained permission to return to Rome. He even regained a portion of his possessions. Adversity had taught him wisdom.

He avoided all intercourse with the wives and daughters of Roman citizens, made no efforts towards obtaining office, held aloof from public honours, and lived a secluded life in his house on the Esquiline. Occupying himself with the task of recording all the remarkable things he had seen during his distant travels, he turned, as he said, the vicissitudes of his years of expiation into a diversion for his hours of rest. In the midst of these calm employments, alternating with assiduous study of the works of Epicurus, he recognized with a mixture of surprise and vexation that age was stealing upon him. In his sixty-second year, being afflicted with an illness which proved in no slight degree troublesome, he decided to have recourse to the waters at Baïæ. The coast at that point, once frequented by the halcyon, was at this date the resort of the wealthy Roman, greedy of pleasure. For a week Lamia

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lived alone, without a friend in the brilliant crowd. Then one day, after dinner, an inclination to which he yielded, urged him to ascend the incline, which, covered with vines that resembled bacchantes, looked out upon the waves.

Having reached the summit he seated himself by the side of a path beneath a terebinth, and let his glances wander over the lovely landscape. To his left, livid and bare, the Phlegræan plain stretched out towards the ruins of Cumæ. On his right, Cape Misenum plunged its abrupt spur beneath the Tyrrhenian sea. Beneath his feet luxurious Baiæ, following the graceful outline of the coast, displayed its gardens, its villas thronged with statues, its porticos, its marble terraces along the shores of the blue ocean where the dolphins sported. Before him, on the other side of the bay, on the Campanian coast, gilded by the already sinking sun, gleamed the temples which far away rose above the laurels of Posilippo, whilst on the extreme horizon Vesuvius looked forth smiling.

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Lamia drew from a fold of his toga a scroll containing the *Treatise upon Nature*, extended himself upon the ground, and began to read. But the warning cries of a slave necessitated his rising to allow of the passage of a litter which was being carried along the narrow pathway through the vineyards. The litter being uncurtained, permitted Lamia to see stretched upon the cushions as it was borne nearer to him the figure of an elderly man of immense bulk, who, supporting his head on his hand, gazed out with a gloomy and disdainful expression. His nose, which was aquiline, and his chin, which was prominent, seemed desirous of meeting across his lips, and his jaws were powerful.

From the first moment Lamia was convinced that the face was familiar to him. He hesitated a moment before the name came to him. Then suddenly hastening towards the litter with a display of surprise and delight—

“Pontius Pilate!” he cried. “The gods be praised who have permitted me to see you once again!”

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The old man gave a signal to the slaves to stop, and cast a keen glance upon the stranger who had addressed him.

"Pontius, my dear host," resumed the latter, "have twenty years so far whitened my hair and hollowed my cheeks that you no longer recognize your friend Ælius Lamia?"

At this name Pontius Pilate dismounted from the litter as actively as the weight of his years and the heaviness of his gait permitted him, and embraced Ælius Lamia again and again.

"Gods! what a treat it is to me to see you once more! But, alas, you call up memories of those long-vanished days when I was Procurator of Judæa in the province of Syria. Why, it must be thirty years ago that I first met you. It was at Cæsarea, whither you came to drag out your weary term of exile. I was fortunate enough to alleviate it a little; and out of friendship, Lamia, you followed me to that depressing place Jerusalem, where the Jews filled me with bitterness and disgust. You remained for more than ten years my guest and my

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companion, and in converse about Rome and things Roman we both of us managed to find consolation—you for your misfortunes, and I for my burdens of State.”

Lamia embraced him afresh.

“You forget two things, Pontius; you are overlooking the facts that you used your influence on my behalf with Herod Antipas, and that your purse was freely open to me.”

“Let us not talk of that,” replied Pontius, “since after your return to Rome you sent me by one of your freedmen a sum of money which repaid me with usury.”

“Pontius, I could never consider myself out of your debt by the mere payment of money. But tell me, have the gods fulfilled your desires? Are you in the enjoyment of all the happiness you deserve? Tell me about your family, your fortunes, your health.”

“I have withdrawn to Sicily, where I possess estates, and where I cultivate wheat for the market. My eldest daughter, my best-beloved Pontia, who has been left a widow, lives with me, and directs my house-

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hold. The gods be praised, I have preserved my mental vigour; my memory is not in the least degree enfeebled. But old age always brings in its train a long procession of griefs and infirmities. I am cruelly tormented with gout. And at this very moment you find me on my way to the Phlegræan plain in search of a remedy for my sufferings. From that burning soil, whence at night flames burst forth, proceed acrid exhalations of sulphur, which, so they say, ease the pains and restore suppleness to the stiffened joints. At least, the physicians assure me that it is so."

"May you find it so in your case, Pontius. But, despite the gout and its burning torments, you scarcely look as old as myself, although in reality you must be my senior by ten years. Unmistakably you have retained a greater degree of vigour than I ever possessed, and I am overjoyed to find you looking so hale. Why, dear friend, did you retire from the public service before the customary age? Why, on resigning your governorship in Judæa, did you with-

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draw to a voluntary exile on your Sicilian estates? Give me an account of your doings from the moment that I ceased to be a witness of them. You were preparing to suppress a Samaritan rising when I set out for Cappadocia, where I hoped to draw some profit from the breeding of horses and mules. I have not seen you since then. How did that expedition succeed? Pray tell me. Everything interests me that concerns you in any way."

Pontius Pilate sadly shook his head.

"My natural disposition," he said, "as well as a sense of duty, impelled me to fulfil my public responsibilities, not merely with diligence, but even with ardour. But I was pursued by unrelenting hatred. Intrigues and calumnies cut short my career in its prime, and the fruit it should have looked to bear has withered away. You ask me about the Samaritan insurrection. Let us sit down on this hillock. I shall be able to give you an answer in few words. Those occurrences are as vividly present to me as if they had happened yesterday.

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“A man of the people, of persuasive speech.—there are many such to be met with in Syria—induced the Samaritans to gather together in arms on Mount Gerizim (which in that country is looked upon as a holy place) under the promise that he would disclose to their sight, the sacred vessels which in the ancient days of Evander and our father, Æneas, had been hidden away by an eponymous hero, or rather a tribal deity, named Moses. Upon this assurance the Samaritans rose in rebellion; but having been warned in time to forestall them, I dispatched detachments of infantry to occupy the mountain, and stationed cavalry to keep the approaches to it under observation. ••

“These measures of prudence were urgent. The rebels were already laying siege to the town of Tyrathaba, situated at the foot of Mount Gerizim. I easily dispersed them, and stifled the as yet scarcely organized revolt. Then, in order to give a forcible example with as few victims as possible, I handed over to execution the leaders of the

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rebellion. But you are aware, Lamia, in what strait dependence I was kept by the proconsul Vitellius, who governed Syria not in, but against the interests of Rome, and looked upon the provinces of the Empire as territories which could be farmed out to tetrarchs. The head-men among the Samaritans, in their resentment against me, came and fell at his feet lamenting. To listen to them, nothing had been further from their thoughts than to disobey Cæsar. It was I who had provoked the rising, and it was purely in order to withstand my violence that they had gathered together round Tyrathaba. Vitellius listened to their complaints, and handing over the affairs of Judæa to his friend Marcellus, commanded me to go and justify my proceedings before the Emperor himself. With a heart overflowing with grief and resentment I took ship. Just as I approached the shores of Italy, Tiberius, worn out with age and the cares of empire, died suddenly on the self-same Cape Misenum, whose peak we see from this very spot magnified in the mists

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of evening. I demanded justice of Caius, his successor, whose perception was naturally acute, and who was acquainted with Syrian affairs. But marvel with me, Lamia, at the maliciousness of fortune, resolved on my discomfiture. Caius then had in his suite at Rome the Jew Agrippa, his companion, the friend of his childhood, whom he cherished as his own eyes. Now Agrippa favoured Vitellius, inasmuch as Vitellius was the enemy of Antipas, whom Agrippa pursued with his hatred. The Emperor adopted the prejudices of his beloved Asiatic and refused even to listen to me. There was nothing for me to do but bow beneath the stroke of unmerited misfortune. With tears for my meat and gall for my portion, I withdrew to my estates in Sicily, where I should have died of grief if my sweet Pontia had not come to console her father. I have cultivated wheat, and succeeded in producing the fullest ears in the whole province. But now my life is ended; the future will judge between Vitellius and me."

"Pontius," replied Lamia, "I am per-

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suaded that you acted towards the Samaritans according to the rectitude of your character, and solely in the interests of Rome. But were you not perchance on that occasion a trifle too much influenced by that impetuous courage which has always swayed you? You will remember that in Judæa it often happened that I who, younger than you, should naturally have been more impetuous than you, was obliged to urge you to clemency and suavity."

"Suavity towards the Jews!" cried Pontius Pilate. "Although you have lived amongst them, it seems clear that you ill understand those enemies of the human race. Haughty and at the same time base, combining an invincible obstinacy with a despicably mean spirit, they weary alike your love and your hatred. My character, Lamia, was formed upon the maxims of the divine Augustus. When I was appointed Procurator of Judæa, the world was already penetrated with the majestic ideal of the *pax romana*. No longer, as in the days of our internecine strife, were we witnesses to the

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sack of a province for the aggrandisement of a proconsul. I knew where my duty lay. I was careful that my actions should be governed by prudence and moderation. The gods are my witnesses that I was resolved upon mildness, and upon mildness only. Yet what did my benevolent intentions avail me? You were at my side, Lamia, when, at the outset of my career as ruler, the first rebellion came to a head. Is there any need for me to recall the details to you? The garrison had been transferred from Cæsarea to take up its winter quarters at Jerusalem. Upon the ensigns of the legionaries appeared the presentment of Cæsar. The inhabitants of Jerusalem, who did not recognize the indwelling divinity of the Emperor, were scandalized at this, as though, when obedience is compulsory, it were not less abject to obey a god than a man. The priests of their nation appeared before my tribunal imploring me with supercilious humility to have the ensigns removed from within the holy city. Out of reverence for the divine nature of Cæsar

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and the majesty of the empire, I refused to comply. Then the rabble made common cause with the priests, and all around the pretorium portentous cries of supplication arose. I ordered the soldiers to stack their spears in front of the tower of Antonia, and to proceed, armed only with sticks like lictors, to disperse the insolent crowd. But, heedless of blows, the Jews continued their entreaties, and the more obstinate amongst them threw themselves on the ground and, exposing their throats to the rods, deliberately courted death. You were a witness of my humiliation on that occasion, Lamia. „By the order of Vitellius I was forced to send the insignia back to Cæsarea. That disgrace I had certainly not merited. „Before the immortal gods I swear that never once during my term of office did I flout justice and the laws. But I am grown old. My enemies and detractors are dead. I shall die unavenged.” Who will now retrieve my character?”

He moaned and lapsed into silence. Lamia replied—

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“That man is prudent who neither hopes nor fears anything from the uncertain events of the future. Does it matter in the least what estimate men may form of us hereafter? We ourselves are after all our own witnesses, and our own judges. You must rely, Pontius Pilate, on the testimony you yourself bear to your own rectitude. Be content with your own personal respect and that of your friends. For the rest, we know that mildness by itself will not suffice for the work of government. There is but little room in the actions of public men for that indulgence of human frailty which the philosophers recommend.”

“We’ll say no more at present,” said Pontius. “The sulphureous fumes which rise from the Phlegrean plain are more powerful when the ground which exhales them is still warm beneath the sun’s rays. I must hasten on. Adieu! But now that I have rediscovered a friend, I should wish to take advantage of my good fortune. Do me the favour, Ælius Lamia, to give me your company at supper at my house to-

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morrow. My house stands on the sea-shore, at the extreme end of the town in the direction of Misenum. You will easily recognize it by the porch which bears a painting representing Orpheus surrounded by tigers and lions, whom he is charming with the strains from his lyre.

"Till to-morrow, Lamia," he repeated, as he climbed once more into his litter. "To-morrow we will talk about Judæa."

The following day at the supper hour Lamia presented himself at the house of Pontius Pilate. Two couches only were in readiness for occupants. Creditably but simply equipped, the table held a silver service in which were set out beccaficos in honey, thrushes, oysters from the Lucrine lake, and lampreys from Sicily. As they proceeded with their repast, Pontius and Lamia interchanged inquiries with one another about their ailments, the symptoms of which they described at considerable length, mutually emulous of communicating the various remedies which had been recom-

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mended to them. Then, congratulating themselves on being thrown together once more at Baiæ, they vied with one another in praise of the beauty of that enchanting coast and the mildness of the climate they enjoyed. Lamia was enthusiastic about the charms of the courtesans who frequented the seashore laden with golden ornaments and trailing draperies of barbaric broiery. But the aged Procurator deplored the ostentation with which by means of trumpery jewels and filmy garments foreigners and even enemies of the empire beguiled the Romans of their gold. After a time they turned to the subject of the great engineering feats that had been accomplished in the country; the prodigious bridge constructed by Caius between Putcoli and Baiæ, and the canals which Augustus excavated to convey the waters of the ocean to Lake Avernus and the Lucrine lake.

"I also," said Pontius, with a sigh, "I also wished to set afoot public works of great utility. When, for my sins, I was appointed Governor of Judæa, I conceived the idea of

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furnishing Jerusalem with an abundant supply of pure water by means of an aqueduct. The elevation of the levels, the proportionate capacity of the various parts, the gradient for the brazen reservoirs to which the distribution pipes were to be fixed—I had gone into every detail, and decided everything for myself with the assistance of mechanical experts. I had drawn up regulations for the superintendents so as to prevent individuals from making unauthorized depredations. The architects and the workmen had their instructions. I gave orders for the commencement of operations. But far from viewing with satisfaction the construction of that conduit, which was intended to carry to their town upon its massive arches not only water but health, the inhabitants of Jerusalem gave vent to lamentable outcries. They gathered tumultuously together, exclaiming against the sacrilege and impiety, and, hurling themselves upon the workmen, scattered the very foundation stones. Can you picture to yourself, Lamia, a filthier set of

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barbarians? Nevertheless, Vitellius decided in their favour, and I received orders to put a stop to the work."

"It is a knotty point," said Lamia, "how far one is justified in devising things for the commonweal against the will of the populace."

Pontius Pilate continued as though he had not heard this interruption.

"Refuse an aqueduct! What madness! But whatever is of Roman origin is distasteful to the Jews. In their eyes we are an unclean race, and our very presence appears a profanation to them. You will remember that they would never venture to enter the pretorium for fear of defiling themselves, and that I was consequently obliged to discharge my magisterial functions in an open-air tribunal on that marble pavement your feet so often trod.

"They fear us and they despise us. Yet is not Rome the mother and warden of all those peoples who nestle smiling upon her venerable bosom? With her eagles in the van, peace and liberty have been carried

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to the very confines of the universe. Those whom we have subdued we look on as our friends, and we leave those conquered races, nay, we secure to them the permanence of their customs and their laws. Did Syria, aforetime rent asunder by its rabble of petty kings, ever even begin to taste of peace and prosperity until it submitted to the armies of Pompey? And when Rome might have reaped a golden harvest as the price of her goodwill, did she lay hands on the hoards that swell the treasuries of barbaric temples? Did she despoil the shrine of Cybele at Pessinus, or the Morimene and Cilician sanctuaries of Jupiter, or the temple of the Jewish god at Jerusalem? Antioch, Palmyra, and Apamea, secure despite their wealth, and no longer in dread of the wandering Arab of the desert, have erected temples to the genius of Rome and the divine Cæsar. The Jews alone hate and withstand us. They withhold their tribute till it is wrested from them, and obstinately rebel against military service."

"The Jews," replied Lamia, "are pro-

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foundly attached to their ancient customs. They suspected you, unreasonably I admit, of a desire to abolish their laws and change their usages. Do not resent it, Pontius, if I say that you did not always act in such a way as to disperse their unfortunate illusion. It gratified you, despite your habitual self-restraint, to play upon their fears, and, more than once have I seen you betray in their presence the contempt with which their beliefs and religious ceremonies inspired you. You irritated them particularly by giving instructions for the sacerdotal garments and ornaments of their high priest to be kept in ward by your legionaries in the Antonine tower. One must admit that though they have never risen like us to an appreciation of things divine, the Jews celebrate rites which their very antiquity renders venerable."

Pontius Pilate shrugged his shoulders.

"They have very little exact knowledge of the nature of the gods," he said. "They worship Jupiter, yet they abstain from naming him or erecting a statue of him.

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They do not even adore him under the semblance of a rude stone, as certain of the Asiatic peoples are wont to do. They know nothing of Apollo, of Neptune, of Mars, nor of Pluto, nor of any goddess. At the same time, I am convinced that in days gone by they worshipped Venus. For even to this day their women bring doves to the altar as victims; and you know as well as I that the dealers who trade beneath the arcades of their temple supply those birds in couples for sacrifice. I have even been told that on one occasion some madman proceeded to overturn the stalls bearing these offerings, and their owners with them. The priests raised an outcry about it, and looked on it as a case of sacrilege. I am of opinion that their custom of sacrificing turtle-doves was instituted in honour of Venus. Why are you laughing, Lamia?"

"I was laughing," said Lamia, "at an amusing idea which, I hardly know how, just occurred to me. I was thinking that perchance some day the Jupiter of the Jews might come to Rome and vent his fury upon

. The Procurator of Judæa

you. Why should he not? Asia and Africa have already enriched us with a considerable number of gods. We have seen temples in honour of Isis and the dog-faced Anubis erected in Rome. In the public squares, and even on the race-courses, you may run across the Bona Dea of the Syrians mounted on an ass. And did you never hear how, in the reign of Tiberius, a young patrician passed himself off as the horned Jupiter of the Egyptians, Jupiter Ammon, and in this disguise procured the favours of an illustrious lady who was too virtuous to deny anything to a god? Beware, Pontius, lest the invisible Jupiter of the Jews disembark some day on the quay at Ostia!"

At the idea of a god coming out of Judæa, a fleeting smile played over the severe countenance of the Procurator. Then he replied gravely—

"How would the Jews manage to impose their sacred law on outside peoples when they are in a perpetual state of tumult amongst themselves as to the interpretation of that law? You have seen them your-

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self, Lamia, in the public squares, split up into twenty rival parties, with staves in their hands, abusing each other and clutching one another by the beard. You have seen them on the steps of the temple, tearing their filthy garments as a symbol of lamentation, with some wretched creature in a frenzy of prophetic exaltation in their midst. They have never realized that it is possible to discuss peacefully and with an even mind those matters concerning the divine which yet are hidden from the profane and wrapped in uncertainty. For the nature of the immortal gods remains hidden from us, and we cannot arrive at a knowledge of it. Though I am of opinion, none the less, that it is a prudent thing to believe in the providence of the gods. But the Jews are devoid of philosophy, and cannot tolerate any diversity of opinions. On the contrary, they judge worthy of the extreme penalty all those who on divine subjects profess opinions opposed to their law. And as, since the genius of Rome has towered over them, capital sentences pro-

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nounced by their own tribunals can only be carried out with the sanction of the proconsul or the procurator, they harry the Roman magistrate at any hour to procure his signature to their baleful decrees, they besiege the pretorium with their cries of 'Death!' A hundred times, at least, have I known them, mustered, rich and poor together, all united under their priests, make a furious onslaught on my ivory chair, seizing me by the skirts of my robe, by the thongs of my sandals, and all to demand of me—nay, to exact from me—the death sentence on some unfortunate whose guilt I failed to perceive, and as to whom, I could only pronounce that he was as mad as his accusers. A hundred times, do I say! Not a hundred, but every day and all day. Yet it was my duty to execute their law as if it were ours, since I was appointed by Rome not for the destruction, but for the upholding of their customs, and over them I had the power of the rod and the axe. At the outset of my term of office I endeavoured to persuade them to hear reason; I attempted

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to snatch their miserable victims from death. But this show of mildness only irritated them the more; they demanded their prey, fighting around me like a horde of vultures with wing and beak. Their priests reported to Cæsar that I was violating their law, and their appeals, supported by Vitellius, drew down upon me a severe reprimand. How many times did I long, as the Greeks used to say, to dispatch accusers and accused in one convoy to the crows!

“Do not imagine, Lamia, that I nourish the rancour of the discomfited, the wrath of the superannuated, against a people which in my person has prevailed against both Rome and tranquillity. But I foresee the extremity to which sooner or later they will reduce us. Since we cannot govern them, we shall be driven to destroy them. Never doubt it. Always in a state of insubordination, brewing rebellion in their inflammatory minds, they will one day burst forth upon us with a fury beside which the wrath of the Numidians and the mutterings of the

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Parthians are mere child's play. They are secretly nourishing preposterous hopes, and madly premeditating our ruin. How can it be otherwise, when, on the strength of an oracle, they are living in expectation of the coming of a prince of their own blood whose kingdom shall extend over the whole earth? There are no half measures with such a people. They must be exterminated. Jerusalem must be laid waste to the very foundation. Perchance, old as I am, it may be granted me to behold the day when her walls shall fall and the flames shall envelop her houses, when her inhabitants shall pass, under the edge of the sword, when salt shall be strown on the place where once the temple stood. And in that day I shall at length be justified."

Lamia exerted himself to lead the conversation back to a less acrimonious note.

"Pontius," he said, "it is not difficult for me to understand both your long-standing resentment and your sinister forebodings. Truly, what you have experienced of the character of the Jews is nothing to their

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advantage. But I lived in Jerusalem as an interested onlooker, and mingled freely with the people, and I succeeded in detecting certain obscure virtues in these rude folk which were altogether hidden from you. I have met Jews who were all mildness, whose simple manners and faithfulness of heart recalled to me what our poets have related concerning the Spartan lawgiver. And you yourself, Pontius, have seen perish beneath the cudgels of your legionaries simple-minded men who have died for a cause they believed to be just without revealing their names. Such men do not deserve our contempt. I am saying this because it is desirable in all things to preserve moderation and an even mind. But I own that I never experienced any lively sympathy for the Jews. The Jewesses, on the contrary, I found extremely pleasing. I was young then, and the Syrian women stirred all my senses to response. Their ruddy lips, their liquid eyes that shone in the shade, their sleepy gaze pierced me to the very marrow. Painted and stained, smelling

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of nard and myrrh, steeped in odours, their physical attractions are both rare and delightful.”

Pontius listened impatiently to these praises.

“I was not the kind of man to fall into the snares of the Jewish women,” he said; “and since you have opened the subject yourself, Lamia, I was never able to approve of your laxity. If I did not express with sufficient emphasis formerly how culpable I held you for having intrigued at Rome with the wife of a man of consular rank, it was because you were then enduring heavy penance for your misdoings. Marriage from the patrician point of view is a sacred tie; it is one of the institutions which are the support of Rome. As to foreign women and slaves, such relations as one may enter into with them would be of little account were it not that they habituate the body to a humiliating effeminacy. Let me tell you that you have been too liberal in your offerings to the Venus of the Market-place; and what, above all, I blame in you is that you

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have not married in compliance with the law and given children to the Republic, as every good citizen is bound to do."

• But the man who had suffered exile under Tiberius was no longer listening to the venerable magistrate. Having tossed off his cup of Falernian, he was smiling at some image visible to his eye alone.

After a moment's silence he resumed in a very deep voice, which rose in pitch by little and little:

"With what languorous grace they dance, those Syrian women! I knew a Jewess at Jerusalem who used to dance in a poky little room, on a threadbare carpet, by the light of one smoky little lamp, waving her arms as she clanged her cymbals. Her loins arched, her head thrown back, and, as it were, dragged down by the weight of her heavy red hair, her eyes swimming with voluptuousness, eager, languishing, compliant, she would have made Cleopatra herself grow pale with envy. • I was in love with her barbaric dances, her voice—a little raucous and yet so sweet—her atmosphere

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of incense, the semi-somnolescent state in which she seemed to live. I followed her everywhere. I mixed with the vile rabble of soldiers, conjurers, and extortioners with which she was surrounded. One day, however, she disappeared, and I saw her no more. Long did I seek her in disreputable alleys and taverns. It was more difficult to learn to do without her than to lose the taste for Greek wine. Some months after I lost sight of her, I learned by chance that she had attached herself to a small company of men and women who were followers of a young Galilean thaumaturgist. His name was Jesus; he came from Nazareth, and he was crucified for some crime, I don't quite know what. Pontius, do you remember anything about the man?"

Pontius Pilate contracted his brows, and his hand rose to his forehead in the attitude of one who probes the depths of memory. Then after a silence of some seconds :

"Jesus?" he murmured, "Jesus—of Nazareth? I cannot call him to mind."

OUR LADY'S JUGGLER

Translated by FREDERIC CHAPMAN

TO GASTON PARIS

OUR LADY'S JUGGLER

IN the days of King Louis there was a poor juggler in France, a native of Compiègne, Barnaby by name, who went about from town to town performing feats of skill and strength.

On fair days he would unfold an old worn-out carpet in the public square, and when by means of a jovial address, which he had learned of a very ancient juggler, and which he never varied in the least, he had drawn together the children and loafers, he assumed extraordinary attitudes, and balanced a tin plate on the tip of his nose. At first the crowd would feign indifference.

But when, supporting himself on his hands face downwards, he threw into the air six copper balls, which glittered in the sun-

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shine, and caught them again with his feet, or when throwing himself backwards until his heels and the nape of the neck met, giving his body the form of a perfect wheel, he would juggle in this posture with a dozen knives, a murmur of admiration would escape the spectators, and pieces of money rain down upon the carpet.

Nevertheless, like the majority of those who live by their wits, Barnaby of Compiègne had a great struggle to make a living.

Earning his bread in the sweat of his brow, he bore rather more than his share of the penalties consequent upon the misdoings of our father Adam.

Again, he was unable to work as constantly as he would have been willing to do. The warmth of the sun and the broad daylight were as necessary to enable him to display his brilliant parts as to the trees if flower and fruit should be expected of them. In winter time he was nothing more than a tree stripped of its leaves, and as it were dead. The frozen ground was hard to the juggler,

Our Lady's Juggler

and, like the grasshopper of which Marie de France tells us, the inclement season caused him to suffer both cold and hunger. But as he was simple-natured he bore his ills patiently.

He had never meditated on the origin of wealth, nor upon the inequality of human conditions. He believed firmly that if this life should prove hard, the life to come could not fail to redress the balance, and this hope upheld him. He did not resemble those thievish and miscreant Merry Andrews who sell their souls to the devil. He never blasphemed God's name; he lived uprightly, and although he had no wife of his own, he did not covet his neighbour's, since woman is ever the enemy of the strong man, as it appears by the history of Samson recorded in the Scriptures.

In truth, his was not a nature much disposed to carnal delights, and it was a greater deprivation to him to forsake the tankard than the Hebe who bore it. For whilst not wanting in sobriety, he was fond of a drink when the weather waxed hot. He was a

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worthy man who feared God, and was very devoted to the Blessed Virgin.

Never did he fail on entering a church to fall upon his knees before the image of the Mother of God, and offer up this prayer to her:

“Blessed Lady, keep watch over my life until it shall please God that I die, and when I am dead, ensure to me the possession of the joys of paradise.”

II

Now on a certain evening after a dreary wet day, as Barnaby pursued his road, sad and bent, carrying under his arm his balls and knives wrapped up in his old carpet, on the watch for some barn-where, though he might not sup, he might sleep, he perceived on the road, going in the same direction as himself, a monk, whom he saluted courteously. And as they walked at the same rate they fell into conversation with one another.

“Fellow traveller,” said the monk, “how comes it about that you are clothed all in

Our Lady's Juggler

green? Is it perhaps in order to take the part of a jester in some mystery play?"

"Not at all, good father," replied Barnaby. "Such as you see me, I am called Barnaby, and for my calling I am a juggler. There would be no pleasanter calling in the world if it would always provide one with daily bread."

"Friend Barnaby," returned the monk, "be careful what you say. There is no calling more pleasant than the monastic life. Those who lead it are occupied with the praises of God, the Blessed Virgin, and the saints; and, indeed, the religious life is one ceaseless hymn to the Lord."

Barnaby replied:

"Good father, I own that I spoke like an ignorant man. Your calling cannot be in any respect compared to mine, and although there may be some merit in dancing with a penny balanced on a stick on the tip of one's nose, it is not a merit which comes within hail of your own. Gladly would I, like you, good father, sing my office day by day, and especially the office of the most Holy

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Virgin, to whom I have vowed a singular devotion. In order to embrace the monastic life I would willingly abandon the art by which from Soissons to Beauvais I am well known in upwards of six hundred towns and villages."

The monk was touched by the juggler's simplicity, and as he was not lacking in discernment, he at once recognized in Barnaby one of those men of whom it is said in the Scriptures: Peace on earth to men of good will. And for this reason he replied:

"Friend Barnaby, come with me, and I will have you admitted into the monastery of which I am Prior. He who guided St. Mary of Egypt in the desert set me upon your path to lead you into the way of salvation."

It was in this manner, then, that Barnaby became a monk. In the monastery into which he was received the religious vied with one another in the worship of the Blessed Virgin, and in her honour each employed all the knowledge and all the skill which God had given him.

Our Lady's Juggler.

The prior on his part wrote books dealing according to the rules of scholarship with the virtues of the Mother of God.

Brother Maurice, with a deft hand copied out these treatises upon sheets of vellum.

Brother Alexander adorned the leaves with delicate miniature paintings. Here were displayed the Queen of Heaven seated upon Solomon's throne, and while four lions were on guard at her feet, around the nimbus which encircled her head hovered seven doves, which are the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, the gifts, namely, of Fear, Piety, Knowledge, Strength, Counsel, Understanding and Wisdom. For her companions she had six virgins with hair of gold, namely, Humility, Prudence, Seclusion, Submission, Virginity, and Obedience.

At her feet were two little naked figures, perfectly white, in an attitude of supplication. These were souls imploring her all powerful intercession for their soul's health, and we may be sure not imploring in vain.

Upon another page facing this, Brother Alexander represented Eve, so that the Fall

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and the Redemption could be perceived at one and the same time—Eve the Wife abased, and Mary the Virgin exalted.

Furthermore, to the marvel of the beholder, this book contained presentments of the Well of Living Waters, the Fountain, the Lily, the Moon, the Sun, and the Garden Enclosed of which the Song of Songs tells us, the Gate of Heaven and the City of God, and all these things were symbols of the Blessed Virgin.

Brother Marbode was likewise one of the most loving children of Mary.

He spent all his days carving images in stone, so that his beard, his eyebrows, and his hair were white with dust, and his eyes continually swollen and weeping; but his strength and cheerfulness were not diminished, although he was now well gone in years, and it was clear that the Queen of Paradise still cherished her servant in his old age. Marbode represented her seated upon a throne, her brow encircled with an orb-shaped nimbus set with pearls. And he took care that the folds of her dress should

Our Lady's Juggler.

cover the feet of her, concerning whom the prophet declared: My beloved is as a garden enclosed.

Sometimes, too, he depicted her in the semblance of a child full of grace, and appearing to say, "Thou art my God, even from my mother's womb."

In the priory, moreover, were poets who composed hymns in Latin, both in prose and verse, in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and amongst the company was even a brother from Picardy who sang the miracles of Our Lady in rhymed verse and in the vulgar tongue.

III

Being a witness of this emulation in praise and the glorious harvest of their labours, Barnaby mourned his own ignorance and simplicity.

"Alas!" he sighed, as he took his solitary walk in the little shelterless garden of the monastery, "wretched wight that I am, to be unable, like my brother, worthily to praise the Holy Mother of God, to whom I have

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vowed my whole heart's affection. Alas! alas! I am but a rough man and unskilled in the arts, and I can render you in service, blessed Lady, neither edifying sermons, nor treatises set out in order according to rule, nor ingenious paintings, nor statues truthfully sculptured, nor verses whose march is measured to the beat of feet. No gift have I, alas!"

After this fashion he groaned and gave himself up to sorrow. But one evening, when the monks were spending their hour of liberty in conversation, he heard one of them tell the tale of a religious man who could repeat nothing other than the Ave Maria. This poor man was despised for his ignorance; but after his death there issued forth from his mouth five roses in honour of the five letters of the name Mary (Marie), and thus his sanctity was made manifest.

Whilst he listened to this narrative Barnaby marvelled yet once again at the loving kindness of the Virgin; but the lesson of that blessed death did not avail to console him, for his heart overflowed with zeal, and he

Our Lady's Juggler

longed to advance the glory of his Lady, who is in heaven.

How to compass this he sought but could find no way, and day by day he became the more cast down, when one morning he awakened filled full with joy, hastened to the chapel, and remained there alone for more than an hour. After dinner he returned to the chapel once more.

And, starting from that moment, he repaired daily to the chapel at such hours as it was deserted, and spent within it a good part of the time which the other monks devoted to the liberal and mechanical arts. His sadness vanished, nor did he any longer groan.

A demeanour so strange awakened the curiosity of the monks.

These began to ask one another for what purpose Brother Barnaby could be indulging so persistently in retreat.

The prior, whose duty it is to let nothing escape him in the behaviour of his children in religion, resolved to keep a watch over Barnaby during his withdrawals to the

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chapel. One day, then, when he was shut up there after his custom, the prior, accompanied by two of the elder monks, went to discover through the chinks in the door what was going on within the chapel.

They saw Barnaby before the altar of the Blessed Virgin, head downwards, with his feet in the air, and he was juggling with six balls of copper and a dozen knives. In honour of the Holy Mother of God he was performing those feats, which aforetime had won him most renown. Not recognizing that the simple fellow was thus placing at the service of the Blessed Virgin his knowledge and skill, the two old monks exclaimed against the sacrilege.

The prior was aware how stainless was Barnaby's soul, but he concluded that he had been seized with madness. They were all three preparing to lead him swiftly from the chapel, when they saw the Blessed Virgin descend the steps of the altar and advance to wipe away with a fold of her azure robe the sweat which was dropping from her juggler's forehead.

Our Lady's Juggler

Then the prior, falling upon his face upon the pavement, uttered these words:

"Blessed are the simple-hearted, for they shall see God."

"Amen!" responded the old brethren, and kissed the ground.

BALTHASAR

Translated by MRS. JOHN LANE

•

TO THE VICOMTE EUGÈNE
MELCHIOR DE VOGÜE

BALTHASAR

“Magos reges fere habuit Oriens.”¹

TERTULLIAN.

IN those days Balthasar, whom the Greeks called Saracin, reigned in Ethiopia. He was black, but comely of countenance. He had a simple soul and a generous heart.

The third year of his reign, which was the twenty-second of his age, he left his dominions on a visit to Balkis, Queen of Sheba. The mage Sembobitis and the eunuch Menkera accompanied him. He had in his train seventy-five camels bearing cinnamon, myrrh, gold dust, and elephants' tusks.

As they rode, Sembobitis instructed him in the influences of the planets,¹ as well as

¹The East commonly held kings versed in magic.

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in the virtues of precious stones, and Menkera sang to him canticles from the sacred mysteries. He paid but little heed to them, but amused himself instead watching the jackals with their ears pricked up, sitting erect on the edge of the desert.

At last, after a march of twelve days, Balthasar became conscious of the fragrance of roses, and very soon they saw the gardens that surround the city of Sheba. On their way they passed young girls dancing under pomegranate trees in full bloom.

"The dance," said Sembobitis the mage, "is a prayer."

"One could sell these women for a great price," said Menkera the eunuch.

As they entered the city they were amazed at the extent of the sheds and warehouses and workshops that lay before them, and also at the immense quantities of merchandise with which these were piled.

For a long time they walked through streets thronged with chariots, street porters, donkeys and donkey-drivers, until all at once the marble walls, the purple awnings and

Balthasar

the gold cupolas of the palace of Balkis, lay spread out before them.

The Queen of Sheba received them in a courtyard cooled by jets of perfumed water which fell with a tinkling cadence like a shower of pearls.

Smiling, she stood before them in a jewelled robe.

At sight of her Balthasar was greatly troubled.

She seemed to him lovelier than a dream and more beautiful than desire.

"My lord," and Sembobitis spoke under his breath, "remember to conclude a good commercial treaty with the queen."

"Have a care, my lord," Menkerâ added. "It is said she employs magic with which to gain the love of men."

Then, having prostrated themselves, the mage and the eunuch retired.

Balthasar, left alone with Balkis, tried to speak; he opened his mouth but he could not utter a word. He said to himself, "The queen will be angered at my silence."

But the queen still smiled and looked not

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at all angry. She was the first to speak with a voice sweeter than the sweetest music.

"Be welcome, and sit down at my side." And with a slender finger like a ray of white light she pointed to the purple cushions on the ground. Balthasar sat down, gave a great sigh, and grasping a cushion in each hand he cried hastily:

"Madam, I would these two cushions were two giants, your enemies; I would wring their necks."

And as he spoke he clutched the cushions with such violence in his hands that the delicate stuff cracked and out flew a cloud of snow-white down. One of the tiny feathers swayed a moment in the air and then alighted on the bosom of the queen.

"My lord Balthasar," Balkis said, blushing; "why do you wish to kill giants?"

"Because I love you," said Balthasar.

"Tell me," Balkis asked, "is the water good in the wells of your capital?"

"Yes," Balthasar replied in some surprise.

"I am also curious to know," Balkis

Balthasar

continued, "how a dry conserve of fruit is made in Ethiopia?"

The king did not know what to answer.

"Now please tell me, please," she urged.

Whereupon with a mighty effort of memory he tried to describe how Ethiopian cooks preserve quinces in honey. But she did not listen. And suddenly, she interrupted him.

"My lord, it is said that you love your neighbour, Queen Candace. Is she more beautiful than I am? Do not deceive me."

"More beautiful than you, madam," Balthasar cried as he fell at the feet of Balkis, "how could that possibly be!"

"Well, then, her eyes? her mouth, her colour? her throat?" the queen continued.

With his arms outstretched towards her, Balthasar cried:

"Give me but the little feather that has fallen on your neck and in return you shall have half my kingdom as well as the wise Sembobitis and Menkera the eunuch."

But she rose and fled with a ripple of clear laughter.

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When the mage and the eunuch returned they found their master plunged deep in thought, which was not his custom.

“My lord!” asked Sembobitis, “have you concluded a good commercial treaty?”

That day Balthasar supped with the Queen of Sheba and drank the wine of the palm-tree.

“It is true, then,” said Balkis as they supped together, “that Queen Candace is not so beautiful as I?”

“Queen Candace is black,” replied Balthasar.

Balkis looked expressively at Balthasar.

“One may be black and yet not ill-looking,” she said.

“Balkis!” cried the king.

He said no more, but seized her in his arms, and the head of the queen sank back under the pressure of his lips. But he saw that she was weeping. Thereupon he spoke to her in the low, caressing tones that nurses use to their nurslings. He called her his little blossom and his little star.

“Why do you weep?” he asked. “And

Balthasar

what must one do to dry your tears? If you have a desire tell me and it shall be fulfilled.

She ceased weeping, but she was sunk deep in thought. He implored her a long time to tell him her desire. And at last she spoke.

"I wish to know fear."

And as Balthasar did not seem to understand, she explained to him that for a long time past she had greatly longed to face some unknown danger, but she could not, for the men and gods of Sheba watched over her.

"And yet," she added with a sigh, "during the night I long to feel the delicious chill of terror penetrate my flesh. To have my hair stand up on my head with horror. O! it would be such joy to be afraid!"

She twined her arms about the neck of the dusky king, and said with the voice of a pleading child:

"Night has come. Let us go through the town in disguise. Are you willing?"

He agreed. She ran to the window at

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once and looked through the lattice into the square below.

"A beggar is lying against the palace wall. Give him your garments and ask him in exchange for his camel-hair turban and the coarse cloth girt about his loins. Be quick and I will dress myself."

And she ran out of the banqueting-hall joyfully clapping her hands one against the other.

Balthasar took off his linen tunic embroidered with gold and girded himself with the skirt of the beggar. It gave him the look of a real slave. The queen soon reappeared dressed in the blue seamless garment of the women who work in the fields.

"Come!" she said.

And she dragged Balthasar along the narrow corridors towards a little door which opened on the fields.

II

The night was dark, and in the darkness of the night Balkis looked very small.

Balthasar

She led Balthasar to one of the taverns where wastrels and street porters foregathered along with prostitutes. The two sat down at a table and saw through the foul air, by the light of a fetid lamp, unclean human brutes attack each other with fists and knives for a woman or a cup of fermented liquor, while others with clenched fists snored under the tables. The tavern-keeper, lying on a pile of sacking, watched the drunken brawlers with a prudent eye. Balkis, having seen some salt fish hanging from the rafters of the ceiling, said to her companion:

“I much wish to eat one of these fish with pounded onions.” . .

Balthasar gave the order. When she had eaten he discovered that he had forgotten to bring money. It gave him no concern, for he thought that he could slip out with her without paying the reckoning. But the tavern-keeper barred their way, calling them a vile slave and a worthless she-ass. Balthasar struck him to the ground with a blow of his fist. Whereupon some of the

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drinkers drew their knives and flung themselves on the two strangers. But the black man, seizing an enormous pestle used to pound Egyptian onions, knocked down two of his assailants and forced the others back. And all the while he was conscious of the warmth of Balkis' body as she cowered close against him; it was this which made him invincible.

The tavern-keeper's friends, not daring to approach again, flung at him from the end of the pot-house jars of oil, pewter vessels, burning lamps, and even the huge bronze cauldron in which a whole sheep was stewing. This cauldron fell with a horrible crash on Balthasar's head and split his skull. For a moment he stood as if dazed, and then summoning all his strength he flung the cauldron back with such force that its weight was increased tenfold. The shock of the hurtling metal was mingled with indescribable roars and death rattles. Profiting by the terror of the survivors, and fearing that Balkis might be injured, he seized her in his arms and fled with her

Balthasar

through the silence and darkness of the lonely byways. The stillness of night enveloped the earth, and the fugitives heard the clamour of the women and the carousers, who pursued them at haphazard, die away in the darkness. Soon they heard nothing more than the sound of dripping blood as it fell from the brow of Balthasar on the breast of Balkis.

"I love you," the queen murmured.

And by the light of the moon as it emerged from behind a cloud the king saw the white and liquid radiance of her half-closed eyes. They descended the dry bed of a stream, and suddenly Balthasar's foot slipped on the moss and they fell together locked in each other's embrace. They seemed to sink for ever into a delicious void, and the world of the living ceased to exist for them. They were still plunged in the enchanting forgetfulness of time, space, and separate existence, when at daybreak the gazelles came to drink out of the hollows among the stones.

At that moment a passing band of

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brigands discovered the two lovers lying on the moss.

"They are poor," they said, "but we shall sell them for a great price, for they are so young and beautiful."

Upon which they surrounded them, and having bound them they tied them to the tail of an ass and proceeded on their way.

The black man so bound threatened the brigands with death. But Balkis, who shivered in the cool, fresh air of the morning, only smiled, as if at something unseen.

They tramped through frightful solitudes until the heat of mid-day made itself felt. The sun was already high when the brigands unbound their prisoners, and, letting them sit in the shade of a rock, threw them some mouldy bread which Balthasar disdained to touch but which Balkis ate greedily.

She laughed. And when the brigand chief asked why she laughed, she replied:

"I laughed at the thought that I shall have you all hanged."

"Indeed!" cried the chief, "a curious

Balthasar

assertion in the mouth of a scullery wench like you, my love! Doubtless you will hang us all by aid of that blackamoor gallant of yours?"

At this insult Balthasar flew into a fearful rage, and he flung himself on the brigand and clutched his neck with such violence that he nearly strangled him.

But the other drew his knife and plunged it into his body to the very hilt. The poor king rolled to earth, and as he turned on Balkis a dying glance his sight faded.

III

At this moment was heard an uproar of men, horses and weapons, and Balkis recognized her trusty Abner who had come at the head of her guards to rescue his queen, of whose mysterious disappearance he had heard during the night.

Three times he prostrated himself at the feet of Balkis, and ordered the litter to advance which had been prepared to receive her. In the meantime the guards bound the hands of the brigands. The queen

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turned towards the chief and said gently: "You cannot accuse me of having made you an idle promise, my friend. when I said you would be hanged."

The mage Sembobitis and Menkera the eunuch, who stood beside Abner, gave utterance to terrible cries when they saw their king lying motionless on the ground with a knife in his stomach. They raised him with great care. Sembobitis, who was highly versed in the science of medicine, saw that he still breathed. He applied a temporary bandage while Menkera wiped the foam from the king's lips. Then they bound him to a horse and led him gently to the palace of the queen.

For fifteen days Balthasar lay in the agonies of delirium. He raved without ceasing of the steaming cauldron and the moss in the ravine, and he incessantly cried aloud for Balkis. At last, on the sixteenth day, he opened his eyes and saw at his bedside Sembobitis and Menkera, but he did not see the queen.

"Where is she? What is she doing?"

Balthasar

"My lord," replied Menkera, "she is closeted with the King of Comagena."

"They are doubtless agreeing to an exchange of merchandise," added the sage Sembobitis.

"But be not so disturbed, my lord, or you will redouble your fever."

"I must see her," cried Balthasar. And he flew towards the apartments of the queen, and neither the sage nor the eunuch could restrain him. On nearing the bedchamber he beheld the King of Comagena come forth covered with gold and glittering like the sun. Balkis, smiling and with eyes closed, lay on a purple couch.

"My Balkis, my Balkis!" cried Balthasar.

She did not even turn her head but seemed to prolong a dream.

Balthasar approached and took her hand which she rudely snatched away.

"What do you want?" she said.

"Do you ask?" the black king answered, and burst into tears.

She turned on him her hard, calm eyes.

Then he realized that she had forgotten

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everything, and he reminded her of the night of the stream.

"In truth, my lord," said she, "I do not know to what you refer. The wine of the palm does not agree with you. You must have dreamed."

"What," cried the unhappy king, wringing his hands, "your kisses, and the knife which has left its mark on me, are these dreams?"

She rose; the jewels on her robe made a sound as of hail and flashed forth lightnings.

"My lord," she said, "it is the hour my council assembles. I have not the leisure to interpret the dreams of your suffering brain. Take some repose. Farewell."

Balthasar felt himself sinking, but with a supreme effort not to betray his weakness to this wicked woman, he ran to his room where he fell in a swoon and his wound re-opened.

IV

For three weeks he remained unconscious and as one dead, but having on the twenty-second day recovered his senses, he seized

Balthasar

the hand of Sembobitis, who, with Menkera, watched over him, and cried, weeping:

"O, my friends, how happy you are, one to be old and the other the same as old. But no! there is no happiness on earth, everything is bad, for love is an evil and Balkis is wicked."

"Wisdom confers happiness," replied Sembobitis.

"I will try it," said Balthasar. "But let us depart at once for Ethiopia." And as he had lost all he loved he resolved to consecrate himself to wisdom and to become a mage. If this decision gave him no especial pleasure it at least restored to him something of tranquillity. Every evening, seated on the terrace of his palace in company with the sage Sembobitis and Menkera the eunuch, he gazed at the palm-trees standing motionless against the horizon, or watched the crocodiles by the light of the moon float down the Nile like trunks of trees.

"One never wearies of admiring the beauties of Nature," said Sembobitis.

"Doubtless," said Balthasar, "but there

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are other things in Nature more beautiful even than palm-trees and crocodiles."

This he said thinking of Balkis. But Sembobitis, who was old, said:

"There is of course the phenomenon of the rising of the Nile which I have explained. Man is created to understand."

"He is created to love," replied Balthasar, sighing. "There are things which cannot be explained."

"And what may those be?" asked Sembobitis.

"A woman's treason," the king replied.

Balthasar, however, having decided to become a mage, had a tower built from the summit of which might be discerned many kingdoms and the infinite spaces of Heaven. The tower was constructed of brick and rose high above all other towers. It took no less than two years to build, and Balthasar expended in its construction the entire treasure of the king, his father. Every night he climbed to the top of this tower and there he studied the heavens under the guidance of the sage Sembobitis:

Balthasar

"The constellations of the heavens disclose our destiny," said Sembobitis.

And he replied:

"It must be admitted nevertheless that these signs are obscure. But while I study them I forget Balkis, and that is a great boon."

And among truths most useful to know, the mage taught that the stars are fixed like nails in the arch of the sky, and that there are five planets, namely: Bel, Merodach, and Nebo, which are male, while Sin and Mylitta are female.

"Silver," he further explained, "corresponds to Sin, which is the moon, iron to Merodach, and tin to Bel."

And the worthy Balthasar answered: "Such is the kind of knowledge I wish to acquire. While I study astronomy I think neither of Balkis nor anything else on earth. The sciences are beneficent; they keep men from thinking. Teach me the knowledge, Sembobitis, which destroys all feeling in men and I will raise you to great honour among my people."

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This was the reason that Sembobitis taught the king wisdom.

He taught him the power of incantation, according to the principles of Astrampsychos, Gobryas and Pazatas. And the more Balthasar studied the twelve houses of the sun, the less he thought of Balkis, and Menkera, observing this, was filled with a great joy.

"Acknowledge, my lord, that Queen Balkis under her golden robes has little cloven feet like a goat's."

"Who ever told you such nonsense?" asked the King.

"My lord, it is the common report both in Sheba and Ethiopia," replied the eunuch. "It is universally said that Queen Balkis has a shaggy leg and a foot made of two black horns."

Balthasar shrugged his shoulders. He knew that the legs and feet of Balkis were like the legs and feet of all other women and perfect in their beauty. And yet the mere idea spoiled the remembrance of her whom he had so greatly loved. He felt a grievance

Balthasar

against Balkis that her beauty was not without blemish in the imagination of those who knew nothing about it. At the thought that he had possessed a woman who, though in reality perfectly formed, passed as a monstrosity, he was seized with such a sense of repugnance that he had no further desire to see Balkis again. Balthasar had a simple soul, but love is a very complex emotion.

From that day on, the king made great progress both in magic and astrology. He studied the conjunction of the stars with extreme care, and he drew horoscopes with an accuracy equal to that of Sembobitis himself.

"Sembobitis," he asked, "are you willing to answer with your head for the truth of my horoscopes?"

And the sage Sembobitis replied:

"My lord, science is infallible, but the learned often err."

Balthasar was endowed with fine natural sense. He said:

"Only that which is true is divine, and what is divine is hidden from us. In vain

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we search for truth. And yet I have discovered a new star in the sky. It is a beautiful star, and it seems alive; and when it sparkles it looks like a celestial eye that blinks gently. I seem to hear it call to me. Happy, happy, happy, is he who is born under this star. See, Sembobitis, how this charming and splendid star looks at us."

But Sembobitis did not see the star because he would not see it. Wise and old, he did not like novelties.

And alone in the silence of night Balthasar repeated: "Happy, happy, happy he who is born under this star."

The rumour spread over all Ethiopia and the neighbouring kingdoms that King Balthasar had ceased to love Balkis.

When the tidings reached the country of Sheba, Balkis was as indignant as if she had been betrayed. "She ran to the King of Comagena who was employing his time in forgetting his country in the city of Sheba.

"My friend," she cried, "do you know

Balthasar

what I have just heard? Balthasar loves me no longer!"

"What does it matter," said the King of Comagena, "since we love one another?"

"But do you not feel how this blackamoor has insulted me?"

"No," said the King of Comagena, "I do not."

Whereupon she drove him ignominiously out of her presence, and ordered her grand vizier to prepare for a journey into Ethiopia.

"We shall set out this very night. And I shall cut off your head if all is not ready by sundown."

But when she was alone she began to sob.

"I love him! He loves me no longer, and I love him," she sighed in the sincerity of her heart.

And one night, when on his tower watching the miraculous star, Balthasar, casting his eyes towards earth, saw a long black line sinuously curving over the distant sands of the desert like an army of ants. Little by little what seemed to be ants grew larger and

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sufficiently distinct for the king to be able to recognize horses, camels and elephants.

The caravan having approached the city, Balthasar distinguished the glittering scimitars and the black horses of the guards of the Queen of Sheba. He even recognized the queen herself, and he was profoundly disturbed, for he felt that he would again love her. The star shone in the zenith with a marvellous 'brilliancy.' Below, extended on a litter of purple and gold, Balkis looked small and brilliant like the star.

Balthasar was conscious of being drawn towards her by some terrible power. Still he turned his head away with a desperate effort, and lifting his eyes he again saw the star. Thereupon the star spoke and said: "Glory to God in the Heavens and peace on earth to men of good will!

"Take a measure of myrrh, gentle King Balthasar, and follow me. I will guide thee to the feet of a little child who is about to be born in a stable between an ass and an ox.

"And this little child is the King of Kings.

Balthasar

He will comfort all those who need comforting.

“He calls thee to Him, O Balthasar, thou whose soul is as dark as thy face, but whose heart is as guileless as the heart of a child.

“He has chosen thee because thou hast suffered, and He will give thee riches, happiness and love.

“He will say to thee: ‘Be poor joyfully, for that is true riches.’ He will also say to thee: ‘True happiness is in the renunciation of happiness. Love Me and love none other but Me, because I alone am love.’”

At these words a divine peace fell like a flood of light over the dark face of the king. .

Balthasar listened with rapture to the star. He felt himself becoming a new man.

Prostrate beside him, Sembobitis and Menkera worshipped, their faces touching the stone. . . .

Queen Balkis watched Balthasar. She realized that never again would there be love for her in that heart filled with a love

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divine. She turned white with rage and gave orders for the caravan to return at once to the land of Sheba.

As soon as the star had ceased to speak, Balthasar and his companions descended from the tower. Then, having prepared a measure of myrrh, they formed a caravan and departed in the direction towards which they were guided by the star. They journeyed a long time through unknown countries, the star always journeying in front of them.

One day, finding themselves in a place where three roads met, they saw two kings advance accompanied by a numerous retinue; one was young and fair of face. He greeted Balthasar and said:

“My name is Gaspar. I am a king, and I bear gold as a gift to the child that is about to be born in Bethlehem of Judæa.”

The second king advanced in turn. He was an old man, and his white beard covered his breast.

“My name is Melchior,” he said, “and I am a king, and I bring frankincense to the

Balthasar

holy child who is to teach Truth to mankind."

"I am bound whither you are," said Balthasar. "I have conquered my lust, and for that reason the star has spoken to me."

"I," said Melchior, "have conquered my pride, and that is why I have been called."

"I," said Gaspar, "have conquered my cruelty, and for that reason I go with you."

And the three Magi proceeded on their journey together. The star which they had seen in the East preceded them until, arriving above the place where the child lay, it stood still. And seeing the star standing still they rejoiced with a great joy.

And, entering the house they found the child with Mary his mother, and prostrating themselves, they worshipped him. And opening their treasures they offered him gold, frankincense and myrrh, as it is written in the Gospel.

· SAN SATIRO ·

Translated by ALFRED ALLINSON

"TO ALPHONSE CAUDET

SAN SATIRO

*Consorts paterni luminis,
Lux ipse lucis et dies,
Noctem canendo rumpimus ;
Assiste postulantibus.*

*Aufer tenebras mentium ;
Fuga catervas demonum ;
Expelle somnolentiam,
Ne pigritantes obruat.¹*

(*Breviarium Romanum*

Third day of the week : antiphons.)

FRA MINO had raised himself by his humility above his brethren, and still a young man, he governed the Monastery of Santa Fiora wisely and well. He was devout, and loved long meditations and long

¹“ Partner of the Father’s light, light of light and day of day, we break the dusk of night with psalms ; help us now, Thy suppliants. Remove the darkness of our minds ; scatter the demon hosts away ; expel the sin of drowsiness, lest we be slack in serving Thee.”

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prayers; sometimes he had ecstasies. After the example of his spiritual father, St. Francis, he composed songs in the vernacular tongue in celebration of perfect love, which is the love of God. And these exercises were without fault whether of metre or of meaning, for had he not studied the seven liberal Arts at the University of Bologna?

Now one evening, as he was walking under the cloister arches, he felt his heart filled with trouble and sadness at the remembrance of a lady of Florence he had loved in the first flower of his youth, ere the habit of St. Francis was a safeguard to his flesh. He prayed God to drive away the image; nevertheless his heart continued sad within him.

"The bells," he pondered, "say like the Angels, AVE MARIA; but their voice is lost in the mists of heaven. On the cloister wall yonder, the Master Perugia delights to honour has painted marvellous well the three Marys contemplating with a love ineffable the body of the Saviour. But the night has veiled the tears in their eyes and the dumb

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sobs of their mouths, and I cannot weep with them. Yonder Well in the middle of the cloister garth was covered but now with doves that had come to drink, but these are flown away, for they found no water in the hollows of the carven well-head. And behold, Lord! my soul falls silent like the bells, is darkened like the holy Marys, and runs dry like the well. Why, Jesus my God! why is my heart arid, and dark, and dumb, when Thou art its dayspring, and the song of birds, and the water-brook flowing from the hills?"

Fra Mino dreaded to return to his cell, and thinking prayer would dispel his melancholy and calm his disquiet, he passed into the Monastery Church by the low door leading from the cloister. Silence and gloom filled the building, raised more than a hundred and fifty years before on the foundations of a ruined Roman Temple by the great Margaritone. He traversed the Nave, and went and knelt in the Chapel behind the High Altar dedicated to San Michele, whose legend was painted in fresco

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on the wall. But the dim light of the lamp hanging from the vault was insufficient to show the Archangel fighting with Satan and weighing souls in the balance. Only the moon, shining through the great window, threw a pale ray over the Tomb of San Satiro, where it lay under an arcade to the right of the Altar. This tomb, in shape resembling the great vats used at vintage time, was more ancient than the Church and in all respects similar to a Pagan sarcophagus, except that the sign of the Cross was to be seen traced in three different places on its marble sides.

Fra Mino remained for hours prostrate before the Altar; but he found it impossible to pray, and at midnight felt himself weighed down under the same heaviness that overcame Jesus Christ's disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane. And lo! as he lay there without courage or counsel, he saw as it were a white cloud rise above the tomb of San Satiro, and presently observed that this cloud was made up of a multitude of cloud-lets, of which each one was a woman. They

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floated in the dim air; and through their light raiment shone the whiteness of their light limbs. Then Fra Mino saw how among them were goat-footed young men who were chasing them. These were naked, and nothing hid the terrifying ardour of their desires. And the nymphs fled away from them, while beneath their racing steps there sprang up flowery meadows and brooks of water. Each time a goat-foot put out his hand to seize one of them, a sallow would shoot up suddenly to hide the nymph in its hollow-trunk as in a cave, and the grey leaves shivered with light murmurings and spurts of mocking laughter.

When all the women were hidden in the sallows, their goat-footed lovers, sitting on the grass of the new-come meadows, breathed in their flutes of reeds and drew from them sounds to destroy the peace of any creature of the earth. The nymphs were fascinated, and soon began to peep out between the branches, and one by one deserting the shady covert, drew near under the irresistible attraction of the music. Then the goat-

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men rushed upon them with a demoniac fury. Folded in the arms of their ruthless assailants, the nymphs strove to keep up a while longer their raillery and loud laughter, but the mirth died on their lips. With heads thrown back and eyes swooning with joy and terror, they could only call upon their mother, or scream a shrill "You are killing me," or keep a sullen silence.

Fra Mino longed to turn his head, but he could not, and his eyes remained wide open in spite of himself.

Meanwhile the nymphs, winding their arms about the goat-men's loins, fell to biting and caressing and provoking their hairy lovers, and body intertwined with body, they enfolded and bathed them in their tender flesh that was sweeter and softer and more living than the water of the brook which ran by them under the willows.

At the sight, Fra Mino fell, in mind and intention, into deadly sin. He desired to be one of these demons, half men and half beasts, and hold to his bosom, after their carnal fashion, the fair lady of Florence he

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had loved in the flower of his years, and who was now dead.

But already the goat-men were scattering through the country-side. Some were busied gathering honey in the hollow trunks of oaks, others carving reeds into the shape of flutes, or butting one against the other, crashing their horned brows together. Meantime the bodies of the nymphs, sweet wrecks of love, lay motionless, strewing the meadows. Fra Mino lay groaning on the Chapel flags; for so fierce had been the desire of sin within him that now he was filled full of bitter shame at his own weakness.

Suddenly one of the nymphs, chancing as she lay to turn her eyes upon him, cried out:

“A man! a man!”

And pointing him out to her companions:

“Look, sisters; yonder is no goat-herd, he has no flute of reed beside him. Nor yet do I recognize him for the master of one of those rustic farmsteads whose garden-close, sloping to the hill-side beneath the vines, is guarded by a Priapus hewn out of a stump of beech. What would he among

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us, if he is neither goat-herd, nor neat-herd, nor gardener? His looks are harsh and gloomy, and I cannot read in his eyes the love of the gods and goddesses that people the wide sky, the woods and mountains. He wears a barbarous habit; perhaps he is a Scythian. Let us approach the stranger, my sisters, and make sure he is not come as a foe to sully our fountains, hew down our trees, tear open our hill-sides and betray to cruel men the mystery of our happy lurking places. Come with me, Mnaïs; come, Ægle, Næara and Melibœa."

"On! on!" returned Mnaïs, "on with our arms in hand!"

"On! on!" all cried in chorus.

Then Fra Mino saw them spring up and gather great handfuls of roses, and advance upon him in a long line, each armed with roses and thorns. But the distance that separated them from him, which at first had seemed very short, for indeed he thought almost to touch them and felt their breath on his face, appeared suddenly to increase, and he watched them coming as though

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from out a far-off forest. Impatient to be at him, they began to run, threatening him with their cruel flowers, while menaces flew from their flower-like lips. And lo! as they came nearer, a change was wrought in them; at each step they lost something of their grace and beauty, and the bloom of their youth faded as fast as the roses in their hands. First their eyes grew hollow and the mouth fell in. The neck, but now so pure and white, hung in great hideous folds, and grey elf-locks dragged over their wrinkled brows. On they came; and their eyes were circled with red, their lips drawn in upon the toothless gums. On they came, carrying dead roses in their arms, which were black and withered as the old vine stocks the peasants of Chianti burn for firewood in the winter nights. On they came, with shaking heads and palsied thighs, tottering and trembling.

Arrived at the spot where Fra Mino stood rooted to the ground with affright, they were no better than a crowd of horrid witches, bald and bearded, nose and chin touching,

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and bosoms hanging loose and flabby. They came crowding round him: •

“Ah, ha! the pretty darling!” cried one. “He is as white as a sheet, and his heart beats like a hare the dogs are snapping at. Ægle, sister mine, say, what must be done with him?”

“Næra mine!” Ægle replied, “why! we must open his breast, tear out his heart and put a sponge in its place instead.”

“Not so!” said Melibœa. “That were making him pay too dear for his curiosity and the pleasure he has had in surprising our frolic. Enough for this time to inflict a light chastisement. Say, shall we give him a good whipping?”

Straightway surrounding the Monk, the sisters dragged his gown above his head and belaboured him with the handfuls of thorns they still held.

The blood was beginning to come, when Næra signed to them to stop: •

“Enough!” she cried! “he is my gallant, I tell you! I saw him just now casting tender eyes at me, I would content his

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wishes, and grant him my favours without more delay."

She smiled alluringly; and a long, black tooth projecting from her mouth tickled his nostril. She murmured softly:

"Come, come, my Adonis!"

Then suddenly, wild with rage:

"Fie, fie! his senses are benumbed. His coldness offends my charms. He scorns me; avenge me, comrades! Mnais, Aëgle, Melibœa, avenge your sister!"

At this appeal, one and all, lifting their thorny whips, fell to scourging him so savagely that Fra Mino's body was soon one wound from head to toe. Now and again they would stop to cough and spit, only to begin afresh, plying their whips more vigorously than ever. Only sheer weariness induced them to leave off.

"I hope," Neæra then said, "next time he will not do me the undeserved insult I still blush to remember. We will spare his life; but if he betrays the secret of our sports and pleasures, we will surely kill him. Good-bye to you, my pretty boy!"

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So saying, the old woman suddenly squatted down over the Monk and drowned him in a torrent of very filthy liquid. Each sister followed suit and did the like; then one after the other they re-entered the tomb of San Satiro, slipping in through a tiny crack in the lid, leaving their victim lying full length in a stream of a most intolerable stench.

When the last had disappeared, the cock crew. Then Fra Mino at last found himself able to rise from the earth. Broken with fatigue and pain, benumbed with cold, shuddering with fever, half stifled with the foul exhalations of the poisonous liquor, he set his clothing straight and dragged himself to his cell, just as day broke.

From that night on, Fra Mino never had a moment's peace. The recollection of what he had seen in the Chapel of San Michele, above San Satiro's tomb, disturbed him in the Church services and in all his pious exercises. He trembled when he visited the Church along with his fellows; and as his turn came, according to the rule, to

San Satiro

kiss the pavement of the Choir, his lips shuddered to encounter the traces of the nymphs' presence, and he would murmur: "O! my Saviour, dost not Thou hear me say what Thou didst Thyself say to Thy Father, Lead us not, we beseech Thee, into temptation?" At first he had thought of sending to the Lord Bishop an account of what he had witnessed. But on riper reflexion, he became convinced it were better to meditate at leisure on these extraordinary events and only divulge them after a more exhaustive study of all the circumstances. Besides, it so happened that the Lord Bishop, allied with the Guelphs of Pisa against the Ghibellines of Florence, was at that moment waging war with such right good will that for a whole month he had not so much as unbuckled his cuirass. And that is why, without saying a word to anyone, Fra Mino made profound researches on the tomb of San Satiro and the Chapel containing it. Deeply versed in the knowledge of books, he investigated many texts, both ancient and modern; yet found no glimmer of enlighten-

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ment in any of them. Indeed the only effect of the works on Magic which he studied was to double his uncertainty.

One morning, after labouring all the night as was his wont, he was fain to refresh his heart with a walk in the fields. He took the hilly path which, winding between the vines and the elms they are wedded to, leads to a wood of myrtles and olives, sacred in old days to the Roman gods. His feet bathed in the wet grass, his brow refreshed by the dew that distilled from the pointed leaves of the Guelder roses, Fra Mino wandered long in the forest, till he came upon a spring over which the wild tamarisks gently swayed their light foliage and the downy clusters of their pink berries. Lower down amid the willows where the water formed a wider pool, herons stood motionless, while the smaller birds sang sweetly in the branching myrtles. The scent of mint rose moist and fragrant from the ground, and the grass was spangled with the flowers of which our Lord said that "Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." Fra Mino sat down on

San Satiro

a mossy stone and praising God, Who made the heavens and the dew, he fell to pondering the hidden mysteries of Nature.

Now the remembrance of all he had seen in the Chapel of San Michele never left his thoughts; so he sat meditating, his head between his hands, wondering for the thousandth time what the dream might signify: "For indeed," he said to himself, "such a vision must needs have a meaning; it should even have several, which it behoves to discover, whether by sudden illumination, or by dint of an exact applying of the scholastic rules. And I deem that, in this especial case, the poets I studied at Bologna, such as Horace the Satirist and Statius, should likewise be of great help to me, seeing many verities are intermingled with their fables."

After long pondering these thoughts within his breast, and others more subtle still, he lifted his eyes and perceived he was not alone. Leaning against the cavernous trunk of an ancientholm-oak, an old man stood gazing at the sky through the leaves,

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and smiling, to himself. Above his hoary brow peeped out two short, blunt horns. His nose was flat with wide nostrils, and from his chin depended a white beard, through which were visible the rugged muscles of the neck. A shaggy growth of hair covered his breast, while from the thighs downwards his limbs showed a thick fleece that trailed down to his cloven feet. He held to his lips a flute of reed, from which he drew a feeble sound of music. Then he began to sing in a voice that left the words barely distinguishable:

Laughing she fled,
Her teeth in the golden grape;
After I sped,
And clasping her flying shape,
I quenched my drouth
On the fruit at her mouth.

Astounded at these strange sights and sounds, Fra Mino crossed himself. Still the old man showed no mark of confusion, but cast a long and artless look at the Monk. Amid the deep wrinkles that scored his face, the clear blue eyes sparkled like the

San Satiro

waters of a spring through the rugged bark of a grove of oaks.

"Man or beast," shrilled Mino, "I command you in the name of the Saviour to say who you are."

"My son," replied the old man, "I am San Satiro! Speak not so loud, for fear of frightening the birds."

Then Fra Mino resumed, in a quieter tone:

"Forasmuch, old man, as you shrank not before the dread sign of the Cross, I cannot hold you to be a demon or some foul spirit escaped out of Hell. But if verily and indeed you are a man, as you say you are, or rather the soul of a man sanctified by the deeds of a good life and by the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ, expound, I pray you, the mystery of your goat's horns and your shaggy limbs ending in those black, cloven hoofs."

At the question, the old man lifted up his arms towards heaven, and said:

"My son, the nature of men and animals, of plants and stones, is the secret of the

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immortal gods, and I know as little as yourself what is the reason of these horns wherewith my brow is decked, and which the Nymphs used in olden days to wind about with garlands of flowers. I cannot tell you the meaning of the two wrinkled folds that droop from my neck, nor why I have the feet of a wanton goat. But I would have you know, my son, there was once in these woods a race of women having horned brows like mine and shaggy thighs. Yet were their bosoms round and white, and their belly and polished loins shone in the light. The sun was young then, and loved to fleck them with his golden arrows, as they lay beneath the shady foliage. They were very fair, my son; but alas! they have vanished from the woods, every one. My mates have perished likewise, and I am left lonely, the last of my tribe."

"I would fain know your age, old man, and your lineage and country."

"My son, I was born of the Earth long ere Jupiter had dethroned Saturn, and my eyes have looked upon the flowery freshness

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of the new-created World. Not yet had the human race emerged from the clay. Alone with me, the dancing Satyr girls set the ground ringing with the rhythmic beat of their double hoofs. They were taller and stronger and fairer than either Nymphs or Women; and their ampler loins received abundantly the seed of the first-born of Earth.

“Under the reign of Jupiter the Nymphs began to inhabit fountains and forests and mountains; while the Fauns, accoupling with the Nymphs, formed light-footed bands that roamed the woods together. Meantime I spent a happy life, tasting at will the clusters of the wild grapes and the lips of the laughing Faun-girls. I enjoyed deep and restful slumbers amid the lush grass; and I would celebrate on my rustic flute Jupiter, Saturn’s successor, for it is of my nature to praise the gods, masters of the world.

“Alas! and I am grown old, for I am but a god, and the centuries have blanched the hairs of my head and of my bosom, and

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have extinguished the fire of my reins. I was already heavily weighted with years when the Great Pan died, and Jupiter, meeting the same lot he had laid upon Saturn, was dethroned by the Galilean. Since then I have dragged out an ever-flagging life, so feeble and languid that at last it fell out I died, and was entombed. And verily I am now but the shadow of myself. If I still exist a little, it is because nothing ever really perishes, and none is suffered altogether to die out. Death must never be more perfect and complete than life. Beings lost in the Ocean of Things are like the waves you may watch, my child, rising and falling in the Adriatic Sea. They have neither beginning nor end, they are born and die insensibly. Insensibly as the waves, my soul passes. A faint far-off memory of the Satyr girls of the Golden Age yet brightens my eyes, and on my lips float soundlessly the ancient hymns of praise."

This said, he fell silent. Fra Mino gazed at the old man, and knew him, that he was a phantom and nothing more.

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“Yes! you may indeed be a goat-foot,” he told him gravely, “without being a demon; ’tis not a thing wholly incredible. Such creatures as God framed to have no part in Adam’s heritage, these can no more be damned than they can be saved. I can never believe that the Centaur Cheiron, who was wiser than men are, is suffering eternal torments in the belly of Leviathan. A traveller who penetrated once into Limbo, relates how he saw him seated in a grassy spot and conversing with Rhipheus, the most righteous man of all the Trojans. Others indeed affirm that Holy Paradise itself has been opened to admit Rhipheus of Troy. Any way the case is one where doubt is not unlawful. But you lied, old man, when you told me you were a Saint, who are not so much even as a man.”

The goat-foot made answer:

“My son, when I was young, I was no more used to lie than the sheep whose milk I sucked or the he-goats, with which I would butt in the joy of my strength and beauty. Lies were unknown in those times,

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nor had the sheep's fleece yet learned to assume factitious hues; and my soul has remained unchanged from that day to this. See, I go naked as in the golden age of Saturn; and my spirit is veiled as little as my body. I am no liar. And why indeed should you deem it a thing so extraordinary, my son, that I have become a Saint in the train of the Galilean, albeit no offspring of the first mother some name Eve and others Pyrrha, and whom it is very meet to reverence under either title? Nay! for that matter, neither is St. Michael woman-born. I know him; and at times we have talks together, he and I. He tells me of the days when he was an ox-herd on Mount Garganus . . ."

But here Fra Mino interrupted the Satyr:

"I cannot suffer you to say St. Michael was an ox-herd, because he guarded the cattle of a man whose name was Garganus the same as the Mountain. But there, I would fain learn, old man, how you were made a Saint."

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"Listen," replied the goat-foot, "and your curiosity shall be satisfied."

"When men coming from the East proclaimed in the fair vale of Arno how that the Galilean had dethroned Jupiter, they hewed down the oaks whereon the country folk were used to hang up little goddesses of clay and votive tablets; they planted crosses over against the holy fountains, and forbade the shepherds any more to carry to the grottos of the Nymphs offerings of wine and milk and cakes. Naturally enough this angered all the tribe of Fauns and Pans and Sylvan Genii, and in their wrath these attacked the apostles of the new God. When the holy men were asleep of nights, on their bed of dry leaves, the Nymphs would steal up and pull their beards, while the young Fauns, slipping into their stable, would pluck out hairs from their she-ass's tail. In vain I sought to disarm their simple malice and exhort them to submission. 'My children,' I would warn them, 'the days of easy gaiety and light laughter are gone by.' But they were reckless, and would not

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hearken; and a sore price they paid for their heedlessness.

“But for myself, had I not seen the reign of Saturn come to an end? and I deemed it natural and just that Jupiter should perish in his turn. I was prepared to acquiesce in the downfall of the great old gods, and offered no resistance to the emissaries of the Galilean. Nay! I did them sundry little services. Better acquainted than they with the forest paths, I would gather mulberries and sloes, and lay them on leaves at the threshold of their grotto, and make them little presents of plovers’ eggs. Then, if they were building a cabin, I would carry the timber and stones for them on my back. In gratitude, they poured water on my brow, invoking on my head the peace of Jesus Christ.

“So I lived with them and in their way; and those who loved them, loved me. As they were honoured, so was I, and my sanctity seemed as great as theirs.

“I have told you, my son, I was already very old in those days. The sun had scarce

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heat enough to warm my benumbed limbs. I was no better than an old rotten tree, that has lost its crown of fresh leaves and singing birds. Each returning Autumn brought my end nearer; and one Winter's morning they found me stretched motionless by the roadside.

"The Bishop, followed by his Priests and all the people, celebrated my obsequies. Then I was laid in a great tomb of white marble, marked in three places with the sign of the Cross, and bearing carved on the slab in front the words *Sanctus Satyrus*, within a garland of roses.

"In those times, my son, tombs were erected along the roadsides. Mine was placed two miles out from the city, on the Florence road. A young plane-tree grew up over it, and threw its shadow across it, dappled with sunlight and full of bird songs and twitterings, freshness and joy. Near by, a fountain flowed over a bed of water-weed, where the boys and girls came laughing merrily to bathe together. It was a charming spot—and soon a holy one as well. Thither young mothers would bring

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their babies and let them touch the marble of the tomb, that they might grow up sturdy and straight in all their limbs. The country folk one and all believed that new-born infants presented at my grave must one day surpass their fellows in strength and courage. This is why they brought me all the flower of the gallant Tuscan race. Moreover the peasants often led their asses thither in hopes of making them prolific. My memory was revered; each year at the return of Spring, the Bishop used to come with his Clergy to pray over my bones, and I could watch far away through the meadow grass the slow approach of Cross and Candle in procession, the scarlet canopy, and the chanting acolytes. Thus it was, my son, in the days of good King Berengar.

“Meantime, the Satyrs and the Satyr girls, the Fauns and Nymphs, dragged out a wretched, wandering life. No more altars of meadow turf for them, no more wreaths of flowers, no more offerings of milk and wheat and honey. Only now and then at long intervals some goat-herd would furtively

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lay a tiny cheese on the threshold of the sacred grot, whose entrance was almost blocked now with thorns and brambles. But it was merely the rabbits and squirrels came to eat these poor dainties. The Nymphs were dwellers in distant forests and gloomy caves, driven forth of their old homes by the apostles from the East. And to hinder their ever returning more, the priests of the Galilean God poured over trees and stones a charmed water, and pronounced magic words and set up crosses where roads met in the forest; for the Galilean, my son, is learned in the art of incantations. Better than Saturn, better than Jupiter, he knows the virtue of formularies and mystic signs. Thus the poor rustic Divinities could no more find refuge in their sacred woods. The company of long-haired, goat-footed Satyrs, that beat of yore their mother earth with sounding hoof, was but a cloud of pale, dumb shadows trailing along the mountain-side like the morning mist the Sun melts and dispels.

“Buffeted, as by a fierce wind, by the

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wrath of Heaven, their spectral forms would be whirled-eddying all day long in 'the dust of the roads. The night on the contrary was somewhat less hostile to them. Night is not wholly the Galilean God's; He shares its dominion with the devils. As the shades of night descended from the hills, Fauns and Faun-women, Nymphs and Pans, came huddling beneath the shelter of the tombs along the roadside, and there under the kindly empire of the infernal powers would enjoy a brief repose. Of all the tombs they liked mine the best, as that of a reverend ancestor of their own. Soon all assembled under that part of the cornice which, giving South, was quite free of moss and always dry. Thither the airy folk came flying every evening as surely as doves to the dovecote. They easily found room, grown tiny now and light as the chaff that scuds before the winnowing-fan. For my own part, sallying out from my quiet death-chamber, I would sit down sometimes in the midst of them under shelter of the marble edge-tiles, and in a feeble, whistling voice sing them songs

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of the days of Saturn and Jupiter; then they would remember the happy times gone by for ever. Under the eyes of Diana, they would join to make a show of their ancient pastimes, and the belated traveller would seem to see the night mists of the meadows in the moonlight mimic the intertwining limbs of lovers. And in very deed they were little more than a fleeting fog themselves. The cold tried them sorely. One night, when the snow shrouded the fields, the Nymphs Ægle, Neæra, Mnaïs and Melibœa glided through the cracks in the marble into the narrow, gloomy chamber where I dwell. Their comrades crowded after in their train, and the Fauns, dashing in pursuit of them, quickly joined them too. My house became their house. We scarcely ever left it, except to visit the woods, when the night was fine and clear. Even then they would make haste to return at the first cock-crow. For you must know, my son, that alone of the horned race I have leave to appear on this earth by the light of day. It is a privilege attached to my Saintship.

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"My tomb now inspired more veneration than ever among the country people, and every day young mothers came to present their nurslings to me, lifting the naked babes in their arms. When the sons of St. Francis settled in the land, and built a monastery on the hill-side, they craved the Bishop's leave to transfer my monument to their Church and there keep it as a sacred thing. The favour was granted, and I was borne in great pomp to the Chapel of San Michele, where I repose to this day. My rustic family was carried thither along with me. It was a signal honour; but I confess I regretted the broad highway, where I could watch at dawn the peasant women carrying on their heads their basketfuls of grapes and figs and red aubergines. Time has hardly softened my regret, and I would I were still beneath the plane-tree on the Sacred Way.

"Such is my life," ended the old Satyr. "It flows on pleasantly, gentle and unobtrusive, down all the ages of the world. If a touch of sadness mingles with the joy of it, 'tis because the gods have willed it so.

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Oh! my son, let us praise the gods, masters of the universe!"

Fra Mino stood thinking a while. Then he said :

"I understand now the meaning of what I saw, during that evil night, in the Chapel of San Michele. Still one point remains dark to my mind. Tell me why, old man, the Nymphs who dwell with you, and couple with the Fauns, changed into old women of squalid ugliness when they came nigh me."

"Alas! my son," answered the Saint, "time spares neither men nor gods. These last are immortal only in the imagination of the short-lived race of men. In reality they suffer the penalties of age, and verge, as the centuries go by, towards irreparable decay. Nymphs grow old as well as women. No rose but turns into an arid hip at last; no Nymph but ends as an ugly Witchwife. Watching as you did the frolic of my little household, you saw how the memory of their bygone youth yet beautifies the Nymphs and Fauns in the moment of their loves, and how their ardour, reanimated an instant, can

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reanimate their charms. But the ruin of centuries shows again directly after. Alas! alas! the race of the Nymphs is old, very old and decrepit."

Fra Mino asked yet another question:

"Old man! if what you say is true, and you have won to blessedness by mysterious ways, if it is true—however absurd—that you are a Saint, how comes it your house in your tomb with these phantoms which know not to praise God, and which pollute with their indecencies the temple of the Lord? Answer me, old man!"

But the goat-footed Saint, without a word of answer, vanished softly away into thin air:

Seated on a mossy stone beside the spring, Fra Mino pondered the discourse he had just listened to, and found it contained, along with some passages impenetrably obscure, others that were full of clearness and enlightenment.

"This Satyr Saint," he reflected, "may be likened to the Sibyl, who in the pantheon of the false gods, proclaimed the coming

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Redeemer to the Nations. The mire of old-world falsehoods yet clings about the hoofs of his feet, but his forehead is uplifted to the light, and his lips confess the truth."

As the shadow of the beeches was lengthening along the grassy hill-side, the Monk rose up from his stone and began to descend the narrow path that led to the House of the Sons of St. Francis. But he dared not let his eyes rest on the flowers sleeping on the surface of the pools, for he saw in them the likeness of the wanton nymphs. He got back to his cell at the moment when the bells were sounding the *Ave Maria*. It was a small, white chamber, furnished simply with a bed, a stool, and one of the high desks writers use. On the wall a mendicant friar had painted years ago, in the manner of Giotto, a representation of the holy Marys at the foot of the Cross. Below this painting, a shelf of wood, as black and polished as the beams of an ancient oil-press, was covered with books. Of these, some were sacred, others profane, for Fra Mino was a student of the classic poets, to

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the end he might praise God in all the works of men, and blessed the good Virgil for having prophesied the birth of the Saviour, when the bard of Mantua declares to the Nations: , *Jam redit et Virgo*.¹

On the window-sill a tall lily stood in a vase of coarse earthenware, for Fra Mino loved to trace the name of the Blessed Virgin inscribed in the gold dust of the flower's calyx. The window itself, which opened very high up in the wall, was small, but the sky could be seen from it, blue above the purple hills.

Ensnconced in this pleasant tomb of his life and longings, Mino sat down before the narrow desk, with its two shelves at top, where he was accustomed to devote himself to his studies. Then, dipping his reed in the inkhorn fastened to the side of the little coffer that held his sheets of parchment, his brushes, and his colours and gold dust, he besought the flies, in the name of the Lord, not to annoy him, and began to write the account of all he had seen and heard in the

¹ Now the Virgin too returns.

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Chapel of San Michele, during his night of torment, as well as on the day just done, in the woods by the stream side. And first of all, he traced these lines on the parchment:

"A true record of those things which Fra Mino, of the Order of Friars Minors, saw and heard, and which he doth here relate for the instruction of the faithful. To the praise of Jesus Christ, and the glory of the blessed and humble poor man of Christ, St. Francis. Amen."

Then he set down in order in writing without omitting aught, all he had noted of the nymphs that turned into witches and the old man with horns on his brow, whose voice quavered in the woods like a last sigh of the Classic flute and a first prelude of the Christian harp. While he wrote, the birds sang; and night closed in slowly, blotting out the bright colours of the day. The Monk lighted his lamp, and went on with his writing. As he recounted each several marvel he had made acquaintance with, he carefully expounded its literal, and its spiritual, signification, all according to the

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rules of rhetoric and theology. And just as men fence about cities with walls and towers to make them strong, so he supported all his arguments with texts of Scripture. He concluded from the singular revelations he had received: firstly, that Jesus Christ is Lord of all creatures, and is God of the Satyrs and the Pans, as well as of men. This is why St. Jerome saw in the Desert Centaurs that confessed Jesus Christ; secondly, that God had communicated to the Pagans certain glimmerings of light, to the end they might be saved. Likewise the Sibyls, for instance the Cumæan, the Egyptian and the Delphic, did these not foreshadow, amid the darkness of the Gentiles, the Holy Cradle, the Rods, the Reed, the Crown of Thorns and the Cross itself? For which reason St. Augustine admitted the Erythræan Sibyl into the City of God. Fra Mino gave thanks to God for having taught him so much learning; and a great joy flooded his heart to think Virgil was among the elect. And he wrote gleefully at the bottom of the last leaf:

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"Here endeth the Apocalypse of Brother Mino, the poor man of Jesus Christ. I have seen the aureole of the blessed Saints crowning the horned forehead of the Satyr, in token that Jesus Christ hath redeemed from the shades of limbo the sages and poets of Antiquity."

The night was already far spent when, having finished his task, Fra Mino stretched himself upon his bed to snatch a little repose. Just as he was dropping asleep, an old woman came in at the window, riding on a moonbeam. He recognized her instantly for the ugliest of the witches he had seen in the Chapel of San Michele.

"My sweet," she said, addressing him, "what have you been doing this day? Yet we warned you, I and my pretty sisters, you must not reveal our secrets. For if you betrayed us, we told you we should kill you. And sorry I should be, for indeed I love you tenderly."

She clipped him in her arms, called him her heavenly Adonis, her darling, her little white ass, and lavished a thousand ardent caresses on him.

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Anon, when he repulsed her with a spasm of disgust:

"Child, child!" she said to him, "you scorn me, because my eyes are rimmed with red, my nostrils rotted with the acrid, fetid humour they distil, and my gums adorned with a single tooth, and that black and extravagantly long. Such is your Neæra to-day, 'tis too true. But if you love me, I shall once more become, by you and for you, what I was in the golden days of Saturn, when my youth was in blossom amid the blossoms of the young, flower-decked world. 'Tis love, oh! my young god, that makes the beauty of things. To restore my beauty, all that is needed is a little courage. Up, Mino, be bold and show your mettle!"

At these words, which were accompanied by appropriate gestures, Fra Mino, shuddering with fear and horror, felt himself swoon away, and slipped from his bed on to the pavement of his cell. As he fell, he seemed to catch a glimpse, between his half-closed lids, of a nymph of perfect shape and peerless

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beauty, whose naked body rolled over his like waves of milk.

He woke in broad daylight, bruised and broken by his fall. The leaves of the manuscript he had written the night before still littered the desk. He read them through again, folded and sealed them with his seal, put the roll inside his gown, and unheeding the menaces the witches had twice over given him, started to carry his revelations to the Lord Bishop, whose Palace lifted its battlements above the roofs in the middle of the city. He found him donning his spurs in the Great Hall, surrounded by his men-at-arms. For the Bishop was just then at war with the Ghibellines of Florence. He asked the Monk to what he owed his visit, and on being informed of the matter, invited him there and then to read out his report. Fra Mino obeyed, and the Bishop heard out his tale to the end. He had no special lights on the subject of apparitions; but he was animated with an ardent zeal for the interests of the Faith. Without a day's delay, and not suffering the cares of the War

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to distract him from his purpose, he appointed twelve famous Doctors in Theology and Canon Law to examine into the affair, urging them to give a definite and speedy decision. After mature inquiry and not without again and again cross-questioning Fra Mino, the Doctors determined the best thing to do was to open the tomb of San Satiro, in the Chapel of San Michele, and go through a course of special exorcisms on the spot. As to the points of doctrine raised by Fra Mino, they declined to pronounce a formal opinion, inclining however to regard as rash, frivolous and new-fangled the arguments advanced by the Franciscan.

Agreeably to the advice of the learned Doctors and by order of the Bishop, the tomb of San Satiro was opened. It was found to contain nothing but a handful of ashes, which the priests sprinkled with holy water. At this there rose a white vapour, from which issued a sound of faint and feeble groans.

The night following this pious ceremony Fra Mino dreamed that the witches, bend-

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ing over his bed, were tearing his heart out of his bosom. He rose at dawn, tortured with sharp pains and devoured by a raging thirst. He dragged himself as far as the cloister well, where the doves used to drink. But no sooner had he drained down a few drops of water that filled a hollow in the well-head than he felt his heart swell within him like a sponge, and with a stifled cry to God, he choked and died.

THE LADY OF VERONA

Translated by ALFRED ALLINSON

TO HUGUES REBELL

THE LADY OF VERONA

"Puella autem moriens dixit: 'Satanas, trado tibi corpus meum cum anima mea.'" (*Quadragesimale opus declamatum Parisiis in ecclesia Sti. Johannis in Gravina per venerabilem patrem Sacre scripturarum interpretem eximium Ol. Maillardum, 1511.*)¹

THE following was found by the Reverend Father Adone Doni, in the Archives of the Monastery of Santa Croce, at Verona.

Signora Eletta of Verona was so wondrous fair and of so perfect a grace of body, that the learned of the city, they who had knowledge of history and legend, were used to call her lady mother by the names of Latona, Leda and Semele, making implication there-

¹ "But the dying girl said, 'Satan, I give over my body to you along with my soul.' " (Lenten Sermon preached at Paris in the Church of St. Jean-en-Grève by that venerable father and excellent expounder of Holy Scripture, Olivier Maillard, 1511.)

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by of their belief that the fruit of her womb had been framed in her by a god, Jupiter, rather than by any mortal man, such as were her husband and lovers. But the wiser heads, notably the Fra Battista, whose successor I am as Superior of Santa Croce, held that such exceeding beauty of the flesh came of the operation of the Devil, who is an artist in the sense the dying Nero understood the word when he said, "*Qualis artifex pereo!*"¹ And we may be sure Satan, the enemy of God, who is cunning to work the metals, excels likewise in the moulding of human flesh.

I myself, who am writing these lines, possessing no small acquaintance with the world, have many a time seen church bells and figures of men wrought by the Enemy of Mankind—and the craftsmanship thereof admirable. Likewise have I had knowledge of children engendered in women by the Devil, but on this matter my tongue is tied by the obligation of secrecy binding on

¹ "What an artist dies in me! Oh! the loss to Art! the loss to Art!"

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every Confessor. I will limit myself, therefore, to saying that many strange tales were bruited concerning the birth of the Signora Eletta. I saw this lady for the first time on the Piazza of Verona on Good Friday of the year 1320, when she had just completed her fourteenth year. And I have beheld her since in the public walks and the Churches ladies most favour. She was like a picture painted by a very excellent limner.

She had hair of wavy gold, a white brow, eyes of a colour never seen but in the precious stone called aquamarine, cheeks of rose, a nose straight and finely cut. Her mouth was a Cupid's bow, that wounded with its smiles; and the chin was as full of laughter as the mouth. Her whole body was framed to perfection for the delight of lovers. The breasts were not of exaggerated size; yet showed beneath the muslin two swelling globes of a full and most winsome roundness. As well by reason of my sacred character, as because I never saw her but clad in her walking dress and her limbs half hidden, I will not describe the other parts

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of her fair body, which one and all proclaimed their perfection through the stuffs that veiled them. I will only assure you, that when she was in her accustomed place in the Church of San Zenone, there was never a movement she could make, whether to rise to her feet or drop on her knees or prostrate herself with forehead touching the stones, as is meet to do at the instant of the elevation of the blessed body of Jesus Christ, without straightway inspiring the men that saw her with an ardent longing to hold her pressed to their bosom.

Now it came about that Signora Eletta married, when about the age of fifteen, Messer Antonio Torlota, an Advocate. He was a very learned man, of good repute, and wealthy, but already far advanced in years, and so heavy and misshapen, that seeing him carrying his papers in a great leathern bag, you could scarcely tell which bag it was dragging about the other.

It was pitiful to think how, as the result of the holy sacrament of wedlock, which is instituted among men for their glory and

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eternal salvation, the fairest lady of Verona was bedded with so old a man, all ruinate in health and vigour. And wise folk saw with more pain than wonder that, profiting by the freedom allowed her by her husband, busied all night long as he was solving the problems of justice and injustice, Messer Torlota's young wife welcomed to her bed the handsomest and most proper cavaliers of the city. But the pleasure she took therein came from herself, not from them at all. It was her own self she loved, and not her lovers. All her enjoyment was of the loveliness of her own proper flesh, and of nothing else. Herself was her own desire and delight, and her own fond concupiscence. Whereby, methinks, the sin of carnal indulgence was, in her case, enormously aggravated.

For, albeit, this sin must ever divide us from God—a sufficient sign of its gravity—yet is it true to say that carnal offenders are regarded by the Sovereign Judge, both in this world and the next, with less indignation than are covetous men, traitors,

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murderers, and wicked men who have made traffic of holy-things. And the reason of this is that the naughty desires sensualists entertain, being directed towards others rather than to themselves, do still show some degraded traces of true love and gentle charity.

But nothing of the kind was to be seen in the adulterous amours of the Signora Eletta, who in every passion loved herself and herself only. And herein was she much wider separated from God than so many other women who gave way to their wanton desires. For, in their case these desires were towards others, whereas the Lady Eletta's had none but herself for their object. What I say hereanent, I say to make more understandable the conclusion of the matter, which I must now relate.

At the age of twenty she fell sick and felt herself to be dying. Then she bewailed her fair body with the most piteous tears. She made her women dress her out in her richest attire, looked long and steadfastly at herself in the mirror, fondled with both

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hands her bosom and hips, to enjoy for the last time her own exceeding beauty. And, aghast at the thought of this body she so adored being eaten of the worms in the damp earth, she said, as she breathed her last, with a great sigh of faith and hope:

“Satan, best beloved Satan! take thou my soul and my body; Satan, gentle Satan! hear my prayer; take, take my body along with my soul.”

She was borne to San Zenone, as custom ordains, with her face uncovered; and, within the memory of man, none had ever seen a dead woman look so lovely. While the priests were chanting the offices for the dead around her bier, she lay as if swooning with delight in the arms of an invisible lover. When the ceremony was over, the Signora Eletta's coffin, carefully closed and sealed, was deposited in holy ground, amid the tombs that surrounded San Zenone, and of which some are Ancient Roman monuments. But next morning the earth they had thrown over the dead woman was found removed, and there lay the coffin open and empty.

PU'TOIS

Translated by WINIFRED STEPHENS

TO GEORGES BRANDÈS

PUTOIS

.i

“WHEN we were children, our tiny garden, which you could go from end to end of in twenty strides, seemed to us a vast universe, made up of joys and terrors,” said Monsieur Bergeret.

“Do you remember Putois, Lucien?” asked Zoé, smiling as was her wont, with lips compressed and her nose over her needlework.

“Do I remember Putois! . . . Why, of all the figures which passed before my childhood’s eyes, that of Putois remains the clearest in my memory. . . Not a single feature of his face or of his character have I forgotten. He had a long head. . . .”

“A low forehead,” added Mademoiselle Zoé.

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Then antiphonally, in a monotonous voice, with mock gravity, the brother and sister recited the following points of a kind of police description:

"A low forehead."

"Wall-eyed."

"Furtive looking."

"A crow's-foot on his temple."

"High cheek-bones, red and shiny."

"His ears were ragged."

"His face was blank and expressionless."

"It was only by his hands, which were constantly moving, that you divined his thoughts."

"Thin; rather bent, weak in appearance."

"In reality of unusual strength."

"He could easily bend a five-franc piece between his thumb and forefinger."

"His thumb was huge."

"He spoke with a drawl."

"His tone was unctuous."

Suddenly Monsieur Bergeret cried eagerly:

"Zoé! We have forgotten his yellow hair and his scant beard. We must begin again."

Putois

Pauline had been listening with astonishment to this strange recital. She asked her father and her aunt how they had come to learn this prose passage by heart, and why they recited it like a Litany.

Monsieur Bergeret replied gravely:

“Pauline, what you have just heard is the sacred text, I may say the liturgy of the Bergeret family. It is right that it should be transmitted to you in order that it may not perish with your aunt and me. Your grandfather, my child, your grandfather, Eloi Berg ret, who was not one to be amused with trifles, set a high value on this passage, principally on account of its origin. He entitled it ‘The Anatomy of Putois.’ And he was accustomed to say that in certain respects he set the anatomy of Putois above the anatomy of Quaresmeprenant. ‘If the description written by Xenomanes,’ he said, ‘is more learned and richer in rare and precious terms, the description of Putois greatly excels it in the lucidity of its ideas and the clearness of its style.’ Such was his opinion, for in those days Doctor Le-

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double, of Tours, had not yet expounded chapters thirty, thirty-one and thirty-two of the fourth book of Rabelais."

"I can't understand you," said Pauline.

"It is because you don't know Putois, my daughter. You must learn that, in the childhood of your father and your aunt Zoé, there was no more familiar figure than Putois. In the home of your grandfather Bergeret, Putois was a household word. We all, in turn, believed that we had seen him."

"But who was Putois?" asked Pauline.

Instead of replying, her father began to laugh, and Mademoiselle Bergeret also laughed, though her lips were closed.

Pauline looked first at one then at the other. It seemed to her odd that her aunt should laugh so heartily, and odder still that she should laugh at the same thing as her brother; for, strange to say, the minds of the brother and sister moved in different grooves.

"Tell me who Putois was, papa. Since you want me to know, tell me."

Putois

"Putois, my child, was a gardener. The son of honest farmers of Artois, he had set up as a nurseryman at Saint-Omer. But he was unable to please his customers and failed in business. He gave up his nursery and went out to work by the day. His employers were not always satisfied."

At these words, Mademoiselle Bergeret, still laughing, remarked:

"You remember, Lucien, when father couldn't find his ink-pot, his pens, his sealing-wax or his scissors on his desk, how he used to say: 'I think Putois must have been here.'"

"Ah!" said Monsieur Bergeret, "Putois had not a good reputation."

"Is that all?" asked Pauline.

"No, my child, it is not all. There was something odd about Putois; we knew him, he was familiar to us and yet . . ."

. . . "He did not exist," said Zoé.

Monsieur Bergeret looked reproachfully at her.

"What a thing to say, Zoé! Why thus break the charm? Putois did not exist!

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Dare you say so, Zoé? Can you maintain it? Before affirming that Putois did not exist, that Putois never was, you should consider the conditions of being and the modes of existence. Putois existed, sister. But it is true that his was a peculiar existence."

"I understand less and less," said Pauline, growing discouraged.

"The truth will dawn upon you directly, child. Know that Putois was born in the fullness of age. I was still a child; your aunt was a little girl. We lived in a small house, in a suburb of Saint-Omer. Our parents led a quiet retired life, until they were discovered by an old lady of Saint-Omer, Madame Cornouiller, who lived in her manor of Monplaisir, some twelve miles from the town, and who turned out to be my mother's great-aunt. She took advantage of the privilege of friendship, to insist on our father and mother coming to dine with her at Monplaisir every Sunday. There they were bored to death. But the old lady said it was right for relatives to dine

Putois

together on Sundays, and that only ill-bred persons neglected the observance of this ancient custom. Our father was miserable. His sufferings were pitiful to behold. But Madame Cornouiller did not see them. She saw nothing. My mother bore it better. She suffered as much as my father, and perhaps more, but she contrived to smile."

"Women are made to suffer," said Zoé.

"Every living creature in the world is born to suffer, Zoé. It was in vain that our parents refused these terrible invitations. Madame Cornouiller's carriage came to fetch them every Sunday afternoon. They were bound to go to Monplaisir; it was an obligation which they could not possibly avoid. It was an established order which only open rebellion could disturb. At length my father revolted, and swore he would not accept another of Madame Cornouiller's invitations. To my mother, he left the task of finding decent pretexts and varying reasons for their repeated refusals; it was a task for which she was ill fitted; for she was incapable of dissimulation."

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"Say rather, Lucien, that she was not willing to dissimulate. Had she wished she could have fibbed like anyone else."

"It is true that when she had good reasons she preferred giving them to inventing bad ones. You remember, sister, that one day she said at table: 'Fortunately Zoé has whooping-cough: so we shall not have to go to Monplaisir for a long time.'"

"Yes, that did happen," said Zoé.

"You recovered, Zoé. And one day Madame Cornouiller came and said to our mother: 'My dear, I am counting on you and your husband coming to dine at Monplaisir on Sunday.' Our mother had been expressly enjoined by her husband to give Madame Cornouiller some plausible pretext for refusing. In her extremity the only excuse she could think of was absolutely devoid of probability: 'I am extremely sorry, madame, but it will be impossible. On Sunday I expect the gardener.'"

"At these words Madame Cornouiller looked through the glazed door of the drawing-room at the wilderness of a little garden,

Putois

where the spindle-trees and the lilacs looked as if they never had and never would make the acquaintance of a pruning-hook. 'You are expecting the gardener! What for? To work in your garden!'

"Then, our mother, having involuntarily cast eyes on the patch of rough grass and half-wild plants, which she had just called a garden, realized with alarm that her excuse must appear a mere invention. 'Why couldn't this man come on Monday or Tuesday to work in your . . . garden? Either of these days would be better. It is wrong to work on Sunday. Is he occupied during the week?'

"I have often noticed that the most impudent and the most absurd reasons meet with the least resistance; they disconcert the opponent. Madame Cornouiller insisted less than might have been expected of a person so disinclined to give in. Rising from her chair, she asked: 'What is your gardener's name, dear?'

" 'Putois,' replied our mother promptly.

"Putois had a name. Henceforth he

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existed. Madame Cornouiller went off mumbling: 'Putois! I seem to know that name. Putois? Putois! Why, yes, I know him well enough. 'But I can't recall him. 'Where does he live? He goes out to work by the day. When people want him, they send for him to some house where he is working. „Ah! Just as I thought; he is a loafer, a vagabond . . . a good-for-nothing.' You should beware of him, my dear.'

"Henceforth Putois had a character."

II

Monsieur Goubin and Monsieur Jean Marteau came in. Monsieur Bergeret told them the subject of the conversation:

"We were talking of the man whom my mother one day caused to exist, and created gardener at Saint-Omer. She gave him a name. Henceforth he acted."

"I beg your pardon, sir?" said Monsieur Goubin, wiping his eye-glasses. "Do you mind saying that over again?"

"Willingly," replied Monsieur Bergeret.

Putois

"There was no gardener. The gardener did not exist. My mother said: 'I expect the gardener!' Straightway the gardener existed—and acted."

"But, Professor," inquired Monsieur Goubin, "how can he have acted if he did not exist?"

"In a manner, he did exist," replied Monsieur Bergeret.

"You mean he existed in imagination," scornfully retorted Monsieur Goubin.

"And is not imaginary existence, existence?" exclaimed the Professor. "Are not mythical personages capable of influencing men? Think of mythology, Monsieur Goubin, and you will perceive that it is not the real characters, but rather the imaginary ones that exercise the profoundest and the most durable influence over our minds. In all times and in all lands, beings who were no more real than Putois have inspired nations with love and hatred, with terror and hope, they have counselled crimes, they have received offerings, they have moulded manners and laws. Monsieur

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Goubin, think on the mythology of the ages. Putois is a mythological personage, obscure, I admit, and of the humblest order. The rude satyr, who used to sit at table with our northern peasants, was deemed worthy to figure in one of Jordaëns' pictures, and in a fable of La Fontaine. The hairy son of Sycorax was introduced into the sublime world of Shakespeare. Putois, less fortunate, will be for ever scorned by poets and artists. He is lacking in grandeur and mystery; he has no distinction, no character. He is the offspring of too rational a mind; he was conceived by persons who knew how to read and write, who lacked the enchanting imagination which gives birth to fables. Gentlemen, I think what I have said is enough to reveal to you the true nature of Putois."

"I understand it," said Monsieur Goubin.

Then Monsieur Bergeret continued:

"Putois existed. I maintain it. He was. Consider, gentlemen, and you will conclude that the condition of being in no way implies

Putois

matter; it signifies only the connexion between attribute and subject, it expresses merely a relation."

"Doubtless," said Jean Marteau, "but to be without attributes is to be practically nothing. Some one said long ago: 'I am that I am.' Pardon my bad memory; but one can't recollect everything. Whoever it was who spoke thus committed a great imprudence. By those thoughtless words he implied that he was devoid of attributes and without relation, wherefore he asserted his own non-existence and rashly suppressed himself. I wager that he has never been heard of since."

"Then your wager is lost," replied Monsieur Bergeret. "He corrected the bad effect of those egotistical words by applying to himself a whole string of adjectives. He has been greatly talked of, but generally without much sense."

"I don't understand," said Monsieur Goubin.

"That does not matter," replied Jean Marteau.

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And he requested Monsieur Bergeret to tell them about Putois.

“It is very kind of you to ask me,” said the Professor. “Putois was born in the second half of the nineteenth century, at Saint-Omer. It would have been better for him had he been born some centuries earlier, in the Forest of Ardén or in the Wood of Broceliande. He would then have been an evil spirit of extraordinary cleverness.”

“A cup of tea, Monsieur Goubin,” said Pauline.

“Was Putois an evil spirit then?” inquired Jean Marteau.

“He was evil,” replied Monsieur Bergeret; “in a certain way, and yet not absolutely evil. He was like those devils who are said to be very wicked, but in whom, when one comes to know them, one discovers good qualities. I am disposed to think that justice has not been done to Putois. Madame Cornouiller was prejudiced against him; she immediately suspected him of being a loafer, a drunkard, a thief. Then, reflecting that since he was employed by my

Putois

mother, who was not rich, he could not ask for high pay, she wondered whether it might not be to her advantage to engage him in the place of her own gardener, who had a better reputation, but also, alas! more requirements. It would soon be the season for trimming the yew-trees. She thought that if Madame Floi Bergeret, who was poor, paid Putois little, she who was rich might give him still less, since it is the custom for the rich to pay less than the poor. And already in her mind's eye she beheld her yew-trees cut into walls, spheres and pyramids, all for but a trifling outlay. 'I should look after Putois,' she said to herself, 'and see that he did not loaf and thieve. I risk nothing and save a good deal. These casual labourers sometimes do better than skilled workmen.' She resolved to make the experiment, she said to my mother: 'Send Putois to me, my dear. I will give him work at Monplaisir.' My mother promised. She would willingly have done it. But really it was impossible. Madame Cornouiller expected Putois at Monplaisir

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and expected him in vain. She was a persistent person, and, once having made a resolve, she was determined to carry it out. When she saw my mother, she complained of having heard nothing of Putois. 'Did you not tell him, my dear, that I was expecting him?' 'Yes, but he is so strange, so erratic . . . ' 'Oh! I know that sort of person. I know your Putois through and through. ' But no workman can be so mad as to refuse to come to work at Monplaisir. My house is well known, I should think. Putois will come for my instructions, and quickly, my dear. Only tell me where he lives; and I will go and find him myself.' My mother replied that she did not know where Putois lived, he was not known to have a home, he was without an address. 'I have not seen him again, Madame. He seems to have gone into hiding.' She could not have come nearer the truth. And yet Madame Cornouiller listened to her with mistrust. She suspected her of beguiling Putois and keeping him out of sight for fear of losing him or rendering him more

Putois

exacting. And she mentally pronounced her over selfish. Many a judgment generally accepted and ratified by history has no better foundation."

"That is quite true," said Pauline.

"What is true?" asked Zoé, who was half asleep.

"That the judgments of history are often false. I remember, papa, that you said one day: 'It was very naive of Madame Roland to appeal to an impartial posterity, and not to see that if her contemporaries were malevolent, those who came after them would be equally so.'"

"Pauline," inquired Mademoiselle Zoé, sternly, "what has that to do with the story of Putois?"

"A great deal, aunt."

"I don't see it."

Monsieur Bergeret, who did not object to digressions, replied to his daughter:

"If every injustice were ultimately repaired in this world, it would never have been necessary to invent another for the purpose. How can posterity judge the

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dead justly? Into the shades whither they pass can they be pursued, can they there be questioned? As soon as it is possible to regard them justly they are forgotten. But is it possible ever to be just? What is justice? At any rate, in the end, Madame Cornouiller was obliged to admit that my mother was not deceiving her, and that Putois was not to be found.

“Nevertheless, she did not give up looking for him. Of all her relations, friends, neighbours, servants and tradesmen she inquired whether they knew Putois. Only two or three replied that they had never heard of him. The majority thought they had seen him. ‘I have heard the name,’ said the cook, ‘but I can’t put a face to it.’ ‘Putois! Why! I know him very well,’ said the road surveyor, scratching his ear. ‘But I couldn’t exactly point him out to you.’ The most precise information came from Monsieur Blaise, the registrar, who declared that he had employed Putois to chop wood in his yard, from the 19th until the 23rd of October, in the year of the comet.

Putois

“One morning, Madame Cornouiller rushed panting into my father’s study: ‘I have just seen Putois,’ she exclaimed. ‘Ah! Yes. I’ve just seen him. Do I think so? But I am sure. He was creeping along by Monsieur T’enchant’s wall. He turned into the Rue des Abbesses; he was walking quickly. Then I lost him. Was it really he? There’s no doubt of it. A man about fifty, thin, bent, looking like a loafer, wearing a dirty blouse.’ ‘Such is indeed Putois’ description,’ said my father. ‘Ah! I told you so! Besides, I called him. I cried: Putois! and he turned round. That is what detectives do when they want to make sure of the identity of a criminal they are in search of. Didn’t I tell you it was he! . . . I managed to get on his track, your Putois. Well! he is very evil looking. And it was extremely imprudent of you and your wife to employ him. I can read character; and though I only saw his back, I would swear that he is a thief, and perhaps a murderer. His ears are ragged; and that is an infallible sign.’

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‘Ah! you noticed that his ears were ragged?’
‘Nothing escapes me. My dear Monsieur Bergeret, if you don’t want to be murdered with your wife and children, don’t let Putois come into your house again. Take my advice and have all your locks changed.’

“Now a few days later it happened that Madame Cornouiller had three melons stolen from her kitchen garden. As the thief was not discovered, she suspected Putois. The *gendarmes* were summoned to Monplaisir, and their statements confirmed Madame Cornouiller’s suspicions. Just then gangs of thieves were prowling around the gardens of the countryside. But this time the theft seemed to have been committed by a single person, and with extraordinary skill. He had not damaged anything, and had left no footprint on the moist ground. The delinquent could be none other than Putois. Such was the opinion of the police sergeant, who had long known all about Putois, and was making every effort to put his hand on the fellow.

“In the *Journal de Saint-Omer* appeared

Putois

an article on the three melons of Madame Cornouiller. It contained a description of Putois, according to information obtained in the town. 'His forehead is low,' said the newspaper, 'he is wall-eyed; his look is shifty, he has a crow's foot on the temple, high cheek-bones red and shiny. His ears are ragged. Thin, slightly bent, weak in appearance, in reality he is extraordinarily strong: he can easily bend a five-franc piece between his thumb and forefinger.

" 'There were good reasons,' said the newspaper, 'for attributing to him a long series of robberies perpetrated with marvellous skill.'

"Putois was the talk of the town. One day it was said that he had been arrested and committed to prison. But it was soon discovered that the man who had been taken for Putois was a pedlar named Rigobert. As nothing could be proved against him, he was discharged after a fortnight's precautionary detention. And still Putois could not be found. Madame Cornouiller fell a victim to another robbery still more audacious

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than the first. Three silver teaspoons were stolen from her sideboard.

"She recognized the hand of Putois, had a chain put on her bedroom door and lay awake at night."

III

About ten o'clock, when Pauline had gone to bed, Mademoiselle Bergeret said to her brother:

"Don't forget to tell how Putois seduced Madame Cornouiller's cook."

"I was just thinking of it, sister," replied her brother. "To omit that incident would be to omit the best part of the story. But we must come to it in its proper place. The police made a careful search for Putois, but they did not find him. When it was known that he could not be found, every one made it a point of honour to discover him; and the malicious succeeded. As there were not a few malicious folk at Saint-Omer and in the neighbourhood, Putois was observed at one and the same time in street, field and wood. Thus, another trait

Putois

was added to his character. To him was attributed that gift of ubiquity which is possessed by so many popular heroes. A being capable of travelling long distances in a moment, and of appearing suddenly in the place where he is least expected, is naturally alarming. Putois was the terror of Saint-Omer. Madame Cornouiller, convinced that Putois had robbed her of three melons and three teaspoons, barricaded herself at Monplaisir and lived in perpetual fear. Bars, bolts and locks were powerless to reassure her. Putois was for her a terribly subtle creature, who could pass through closed doors. A domestic event redoubled her alarm. Her cook was seduced; and a time came when she could conceal her fault no longer. But she obstinately refused to indicate her betrayer."

"Her name was Gudule," said Mademoiselle Zoé.

"Her name was Gudule; and she was thought to be protected against the perils of love by a long and forked beard. A beard, which suddenly appeared on the chin of

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that saintly royal maiden venerated at Prague, protected her virginity. A beard, which was no longer young, sufficed not to protect the virtue of Gudule. Madame Cornouiller urged Gudule to utter the name of the man who had betrayed her and then abandoned her to distress. Gudule burst into tears, but refused to speak. Threats and entreaties were alike useless. Madame Cornouiller made a long and minute inquiry. She diplomatically questioned her neighbours—both men and women—the tradesmen, the gardener, the road surveyor, the *gendarmes*; nothing put her on the track of the culprit. Again she endeavoured to extract a full confession from Gudule. ‘In your own interest, Gudule, tell me who it is.’ Gudule remained silent. Suddenly Madame Cornouiller had a flash of enlightenment: ‘It is Putois!’ The cook wept and said nothing. ‘It is Putois! Why did I not guess it before? It is Putois! You unhappy girl! Oh you poor, unhappy girl!’

“Henceforth Madame Cornouiller was

Putois

persuaded that Putois was the father of her cook's child. Every one at Saint-Omer, from the President of the Tribunal to the lamplighter's mongrel dog, knew Gudule and her basket. The news that Putois had seduced Gudule filled the town with laughter, astonishment and admiration. Putois was hailed as an irresistible lady-killer and the lover of the eleven thousand virgins. On these slight grounds there was ascribed to him the paternity of five or six other children born that year, who, considering the happiness that awaited them and the joy they brought to their mothers, would have done just as well not to put in an appearance. Among others were included the servant of Monsieur Maréchal, who kept the general shop with the sign of 'Le Rendezvous des Pêcheurs,' a baker's errand girl, and the little cripple of the Pont-Biquet, who had all fallen victims to Putois' charms. "The monster!" cried the gossips.

"Thus Putois, invisible satyr, threatened with woes irretrievable all the maidens of a town, wherein, according to the oldest

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inhabitants, virgins had from time immemorial lived free from danger.

“Though celebrated thus throughout the city and its neighbourhood, he continued in a subtle manner to be associated especially with our home. He passed by our door, and it was believed that from time to time he climbed over our garden wall. He was never seen face to face. But we were constantly recognizing his shadow, his voice, his footprints. More than once, in the twilight, we thought we saw his back at the bend of the road. My sister and I were changing our opinions of him. He remained wicked and malevolent, but he was becoming child-like and simple. He was growing less real, and, if I may say so, more poetical. He was about to be included in the naïve cycle of children’s fairy tales. He was turning into Croquemitaine, into Père Fouettard, into the dustman who shuts little children’s eyes at night. He was not that sprite who by night entangles the colt’s tail in the stable. Not so rustic or so charming, yet he was just as frankly mis-

Putois

chievous; he used to draw ink moustaches on my sister's dolls. In our beds we used to hear him before we went to sleep; he was caterwauling on the roofs with the cats, he was barking with the dogs; he was groaning in the mill-hopper; he was minicking the songs of belated drunkards in the street.

"What rendered Putois present and familiar to us, what interested us in him was that his memory was associated with all the objects that surrounded us. Zoé's dolls, my exercise-books, the pages of which he had so often blotted and crumpled, the garden wall over which we had seen his red eyes gleam in the shadow, the blue flower-pot one winter's night cracked by him if it were not by the frost; trees, streets, benches, everything reminded us of Putois, our Putois, the children's Putois, a being local and mythical. In grace and in poetry he fell far short of the most awkward wild man of the woods, of the uncouthest Sicilian or Thessalian faun. But he was a demi-god all the same.

"To our father Putois' character appeared

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very differently, it was symbolical and had a philosophical signification. Our father had a vast pity for humanity. He did not think men very reasonable. Their errors, when they were not cruel, entertained and amused him. The belief in Putois interested him as a compendium and abridgment of all the beliefs of humanity. Our father was ironical and sarcastic; he spoke of Putois as if he were an actual being. He was sometimes so persistent, and described each detail with such precision, that our mother was quite astonished. 'Anyone would say that you are serious, my love,' she would say frankly, 'and yet you know perfectly. . . .' He replied gravely, 'The whole of Saint-Omer believes in the existence of Putois. Could I be a good citizen and deny it? One must think well before suppressing an article of universal belief.'

"Only very clear-headed persons are troubled by such scruples. At heart my father was a follower of Gassendi. He compromised between his individual views and those of the public: with the Saint-

Putois

Omerites he believed in the existence of Putois, but he did not admit his direct intervention in the theft of the melons and the seduction of the cook. In short, like a good citizen he professed his faith in the existence of Putois, and he dispensed with Putois when explaining the events which happened in the town. Wherefore, in this case as in all others, he proved himself a good man and a thoughtful.

“As for our mother, she felt herself in a way responsible for the birth of Putois, and she was right. For in reality Putois was born of our mother’s taradiddle, as Caliban was born of a poet’s invention. The two crimes, of course, differed greatly in magnitude, and my mother’s guilt was not so great as Shakespeare’s. Nevertheless, she was alarmed and dismayed at seeing so tiny a falsehood grow indefinitely, and so trifling a deception meet with a success so prodigious that it stopped nowhere, spread throughout the whole town, and threatened to spread throughout the whole world. One day she grew pale, believing that she was about to

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see her fib rise in person before her. On that day, her servant, who was new to the house and neighbourhood, came and told her that a man was asking for her. He wanted, he said, to speak to Madame. 'What kind of a man is he?' 'A man in a blouse. He looked like a country labourer.' 'Did he give his name?' 'Yes, Madame.' 'Well, what is it?' 'Putois.' 'Did he tell you that that was his name?' 'Putois, yes, Madame.' 'And he is here?' 'Yes, Madame. He is waiting in the kitchen.' 'You have seen him?' 'Yes, Madame.' 'What does he want?' 'He did not say. He will only tell Madame.' 'Go and ask him.'

"When the servant returned to the kitchen, Putois was no longer there. This meeting between Putois and the new servant was never explained. But I think that from that day my mother began to believe that Putois might possibly exist, and that perhaps she had not invented."

A GOOD LESSON WELL LEARNT

Translated by ALFRED ALLINSON

A GOOD LESSON WELL LEARN'T

IN the days of King Louis XI there lived at Paris, in a matted chamber, a citizen dame called Violante, who was comely and well-liking in all her person. She had so bright a face that Master Jacques Tribouillard, doctor in law and a renowned cosmographer, who was often a visitor at her house, was used to tell her: . . .

“Seeing you, madame, I deem credible and even hold it proven, what Cucurbitus Piger lays down in one of his scholia on Strabo, to wit, that the famous city and university of Paris was of old known by the name of Lutetia or Leuceccia, or some such-like word coming from *Leuké*, that is to say, ‘the white,’ forasmuch as the ladies of the same had bosoms white as snow,—yet not so clear and bright and white as is your own, madame.”

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To which Violante would say in answer:

" 'Tis enough for me if my bosom is not fit to fright folks, like some I wot of. And, if I show it, why, 't is to follow the fashion. I have not the hardihood to do otherwise than the rest of the world."

Now Madame Violante had been wedded, in the flower of her youth, to an Advocate of the Parlement, a man of a harsh temper and sorely set on the arraignment and punishing of unfortunate prisoners. For the rest, he was of sickly habit and a weakling, of such a sort he seemed more fit to give pain to folks outside his doors than pleasure to his wife within. The old fellow thought more of his blue bags than of his better half, though these were far otherwise shapen, being bulgy and fat and formless. But the lawyer spent his nights over them.

Madame Violante was too reasonable a woman to love a husband that was so unlovable. Master Jacques Tribouillard upheld she was a good wife, as steadfastly and surely confirmed and stablished in conjugal virtue as Lucretia the Roman. And for

A Good Lesson Well Learnt

proof he alleged that he had altogether failed to turn her aside from the path of honour. The judicious observed a prudent silence on the point, holding that what is hid will only be made manifest at the last Judgment Day. They noted how the lady was overfond of gewgaws and laces and wore in company and at church gowns of velvet and silk and cloth of gold, purfled with miniver; but they were too fair-minded folk to decide whether, damning as she did Christian men who saw her so comely and so finely dressed to the torments of vain longing, she was not damning her own soul too with one of them. In a word, they were well ready to stake Madame Violante's virtue on the toss of a coin, cross or pile, — which is greatly to the honour of that fair lady.

The truth is her Confessor, Brother Jean Turelure, was for ever upbraiding her.

"Think you, madame," he would ask her, "that the blessed St. Catherine won heaven by leading such a life as yours, baring her bosom and sending to Genoa for lace ruffles?"

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But he was a great preacher, very severe on human weaknesses, who could condone naught and thought he had done everything when he had inspired terror. He threatened her with hell fire for having washed her face with ass's milk.

As a fact, no one could say if she had given her old husband a meet and proper head-dress, and Messire Philippe de Coetquis used to warn the honest dame in a merry vein:

"See to it, I say! He is bald, he will catch his death of cold!"

Messire Philippe de Coetquis was a knight of gallant bearing, as handsome as the knave of hearts in the noble game of cards. He had first encountered Madame Violante one evening at a ball, and after dancing with her far into the night, had carried her home on his crupper, while the Advocate splashed his way through the mud and mire of the kennels by the dancing light of the torches his four tipsy lackeys bore. In the course of these merry doings, a-foot and on horseback, Messire Philippe de

A Good Lesson Well Learnt

Coetquis had formed a shrewd notion that Madame Violante had a limber waist and a full, firm bosom of her own, and there and then had been smitten by her charms. He was a frank and guileless wight, and made bold to tell her outright what he would have of her,—to wit, to hold her naked in his two arms.

To which she would make answer:

“Messire Philippe, you know not what you say. I am a virtuous wife,——”

Or another time:

“Messire Philippe, come back again to-morrow,——”

And when he came next day she would ask innocently:

“Nay, where is the hurry?”

These never-ending postponements caused the Chevalier no little distress and chagrin. He was ready to believe, with Master Tribouillard, that Madame Violante was indeed a Lucretia, so true is it that all men are alike in fatuous self-conceit! And we are bound to say she had not so much as suffered him to kiss her mouth,—only a pretty diver-

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sion after all and a bit of wanton playfulness.

Things were in this case when Brother Jean Turelure was called to Venice by the General of his Order, to preach to sundry Turks lately converted to the true Faith.

Before setting forth, the good Brother went to take leave of his fair Penitent, and upbraided her with more than usual sternness for living a dissolute life. He exhorted her urgently to repent and pressed her to wear a hair-shirt next her skin, --an incomparable remedy against naughty cravings and a sovran medicine for natures over prone to the sins of the flesh.

She besought him: "Good Brother, never ask too much of me."

But he would not hearken, and threatened her with the pains of hell if she did not amend her ways. Then he told her he would gladly execute any commissions she might be pleased to entrust him with. He was in hopes she would beg him to bring her back some consecrated medal, a rosary, or, better still, a little of the soil of the Holy Sepulchre

A Good Lesson Well Learnt

which the Turks carry from Jerusalem, together with dried roses, and which the Italian monks sell.

But Madame Violante preferred a quite other request:

"Good Brother, dear Brother, as you are going to Venice, where such cunning workmen in this sort are to be found, I pray you bring me back a Venetian mirror, the clearest and truest can be gotten."

Brother Jean Turelure promised to content her wish.

While her Confessor was abroad, Madame Violante led the same life as before. And when Messire Philippe pressed her: "Were it not well to take our pleasure together?" she would answer: "Nay! 't is too hot. Look at the weathercock if the wind will not change anon." And the good folk who watched her ways were in despair of her ever giving a proper pair of horns to her crabbed old husband. "'T is a sin and a shame!" they declared.

On his return from Italy Brother Jean

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Turelure presented himself before Madame Violante, and told her he had brought what she desired.

"Look, madame," he said, and drew from under his gown a death's-head.

"Here, madame, is your mirror. This death's-head was given me for that of the prettiest woman in all Venice. She was what you are, and you will be much like her anon."

Madame Violante, mastering her surprise and horror, answered the good Father in a well-assured voice that she understood the lesson he would teach her and she would not fail to profit thereby.

"I shall have present in my mind, good Brother, the mirror you have brought me from Venice, wherein I see my likeness not as I am at present but as doubtless I soon shall be. I promise you to govern my behaviour by this salutary thought."

Brother Jean Turelure was far from expecting such pious words. He expressed some satisfaction.

A Good Lesson Well Learnt

"So, madame," he murmured, "you see yourself the need of altering your ways. You promise me henceforth to govern your behaviour by the thought this fleshless skull hath brought home to you. Will you not make the same promise to God as you have to me?"

She asked if indeed she must, and he assured her it behoved her so to do.

"Well, I will give this promise then," she declared.

"Madame, this is very well. There is no going back on your word now."

"I shall not go back on it, never fear."

Having won this binding promise, Brother Jean Turelure left the place, radiant with satisfaction. And as he went from the house, he cried out loud in the street:

"Here is a good work done! By Our Lord God's good help, I have turned and set in the way toward the gate of Paradise a lady, who, albeit not sinning precisely in the way of fornication spoken of by the Prophet, yet was wont to employ for men's temptation the clay whereof the Creator had

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kneaded her that she might serve and adore him withal. She will forsake these naughty habits to adopt a better life. I have throughly changed her. Praise be to God!"

Hardly had the good Brother gone down the stairs when Messire Philippe de Coetquis ran up them and scratched at Madame Violante's door. She welcomed him with a beaming smile, and led him into a closet, furnished with rich carpets and cushions, wherein he had never been admitted before. From this he augured well. He offered her sweetmeats he had in a box.

"Here be sugar-plums to suck, madame; they are sweet and sugared, but not so sweet as your lips."

To which the lady retorted he was a vain, silly fop to make boast of a fruit he had never tasted.

He answered her meetly, kissing her forthwith on the mouth.

She manifested scarce any annoyance and said only she was an honest woman

A Good Lesson Well Learnt

and a true wife. He congratulated her and advised her not to lock up this jewel of hers in such close keeping that no man could enjoy it. "For, of a surety," he swore, "you will be robbed of it, and that right soon."

"Try then," said she, cuffing him daintily over the ears with her pretty pink palms.

But he was master by this time to take whatsoever he wished of her. She kept protesting with little cries:

"I won't have it. Fie! fie on you, messire! You must not do it. Oh! sweetheart . . . oh! my love . . . my life! You are killing me!"

Anon, when she had done sighing and dying, she said sweetly:

"Messire Philippe, never flatter yourself you have mastered me by force or guile. You have had of me what you craved, but 't was of mine own free will, and I only resisted so much as was needful that I might yield me as I liked best. Sweetheart, I am yours. If, for all your handsome face, which I loved from the first, and despite the tender-

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ness of your wooing, I did not before grant you what you have just won with my consent, 't was because I had no true understanding of things. I had no thought of the flight of time and the shortness of life and love; plunged in a soft languor of indolence, I reaped no harvest of my youth and beauty. However, the good Brother Jean Turelure hath given me a profitable lesson. He hath taught me the preciousness of the hours. But now he showed me a death's-head, saying: 'Suchlike you will be soon.' 'This taught me we must be quick to enjoy the pleasures of love and make the most of the little space of time reserved to us for that end.'"

These words and the caresses wherewith Madame Violante seconded them persuaded Messire Philippe to turn the time to good account, to set to work afresh to his own honour and profit and the pleasure and glory of his mistress, and to multiply the sure proofs of prowess which it behoves every good and loyal servant to give on suchlike an occasion.

A Good Lesson Well Learnt

After which, she was ready to cry quits. Taking him by the hand, she guided him back to the door, kissed him daintily on the eyes, and asked: • • •

“Sweetheart Philippe, is it not well done to follow the precepts of the good Brother Jean Turelure?”

FIVE FAIR LADIES
OF PICARDY, OF POUSSOU, OF
TOURNAINE, OF LYONS, AND
OF PARIS

Translated by ALFRED ALLINSON

FIVE FAIR LADIES
OF PICARDY, OF POITOU, OF
TOURAINÉ, OF LYONS, AND
OF PARIS

ONE day the Capuchin, Brother Jean Chavaray, meeting my good master the Abbé Coignard in the cloister of "The Innocents," fell into talk with him of the Brother Olivier Maillard, whose sermons, edifying and macaronic, he had lately been reading.

"There are good bits to be found in these sermons," said the Capuchin, "notably the tale of the five ladies and the go-between . . ." You will readily understand that Brother Olivier, who lived in the reign of Louis XI and whose language smacks of the coarseness of that age, uses a different word. But our century demands a certain

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politeness and decency in speech; wherefore I employ the term I have, to wit, *go-between*.

"You mean," replied my good master, "to signify by the expression a woman who is so obliging as to play intermediary in matters of love and love-making. The Latin has several names for her,—as *lena*, *conciliatrix*, also *internuntia libidinum*, ambassadress of naughty desires. These prudish dames perform the best of services; but seeing they busy themselves therein for money, we distrust their disinterestedness. Call yours a *procuress*, good Father, and have done with it; 't is a word in common use, and has a not unseemly sound."

"So I will, Monsieur l'Abbé," assented Brother Jean Chavaray. "Only don't say *mine*, I pray, but the Brother Olivier's. A procuress then, who lived on the Pont des Tournelles, was visited one day by a knight, who put a ring into her hands. 'It is of fine gold,' he told her, 'and hath a balass ruby mounted in the bezel. An you know any dames of good estate, go say to the most

Five Fair Ladies

comely of them that the ring is hers if she is willing to come to see me and do at my pleasure.'

"The procuress knew, by having seen them at Mass, five ladies of an excellent beauty, — natives the first of Picardy, the second of Poitou, the third of Touraine, another from the good city of Lyons, and the last a Parisian, all dwelling in the Cité or its near neighbourhood.

"She knocked first at the Picard lady's door. A maid opened, but her mistress refused to have one word to say to her visitor. She was an honest woman.

"The procuress went next to see the lady of Poitiers and solicit her favour for the gallant knight. This dame answered her:

"Prithee, go tell him who sent you that he is come to the wrong house, and that I am not the woman he takes me for.'

"She too is an honest woman; yet less honest than the first, in that she tried to appear more so.

"The procuress then went to see the lady

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from Tours, made the same offer to her as to the other, and showed her the ring.

“‘I’ faith,’ said the lady, ‘but the ring is right lovely.’

“‘T’ is yours, an’ you will have it.’

“‘I will not have it at the price you set on it. My husband might catch me, and I should be doing him a grief he doth not deserve.’

“‘This lady of Touraine is a harlot, I trow, at bottom of her heart.

“‘The procuress left her and went straight to the dame of Lyons, who cried:

“‘Alack! my good friend, my husband is a jealous wight, and he would cut the nose off my face to hinder me winning any more rings at this pretty tilting.’

“‘This dame of Lyons, I tell you, is a worthless good-for-naught.

“‘Last of all the procuress hurried to the Parisian’s. She was a hussy, and answered brazenly:

“‘My husband goes Wednesday to his vineyards; tell the good sir who sent you I will come that day and see him.’

Five Fair Ladies

"Such, according to Brother Olivier, from Picardy to Paris; are the degrees from good to evil amongst women. What think you of the matter, Monsieur Coignard?"

To which my good master made answer:
" 'Tis a shrewd matter to consider the acts and impulses of these petty creatures in their relations with Eternal Justice. I have no lights in the matter. But methinks the Lyons dame who feared having her nose cut off was a more good-for-nothing baggage than the Parisian who was afraid of nothing."

"I am far, very far, from allowing it," replied Brother Jean Chavaray. "A woman who fears her husband may come to fear hell fire. Her Confessor, it may be, will bring her to do penance and give alms. For, after all, that is the end we must come at. But what can a poor Capuchin hope to get of a woman whom *nothing* terrifies?"

THE END

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